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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A STUDY ON TEACHERS IN FRENCH IMMERSION

BY

JACINTHE LAVOIE

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER IN EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **A Study on Teachers in French Immersion** submitted by **Jacinthe Lavoie** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Education in Elementary Education.**

David Dillon
(Supervisor)

Daisy Saveda

Claudette Tardif

Date: April 25, 1989

DEDICACE

A mes amis pour leur encouragement et leur compréhension. A tous les enseignants qui oeuvrent dans le domaine de l'immersion française en Alberta.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain the nature of French second language arts activities in two French immersion settings, and the factors that influence these two teachers in the choice and planning of daily activities in their classes.

During the course of the study, the researcher noticed some changes in the pedagogical approach of the two teachers. She decided to observe and analyze the relationships between these factors and the changes produced in the teachers' teaching strategies throughout the school year.

Among research methodologies, an approach based on symbolic interactionist was perceived as the one enabling the researcher to explore and uncover the two teachers' everyday realities in an immersion situation. This theoretical framework rests on the premise that human beings base their actions on the meaning of their social world.

The simulataneous use of informal conversations, formal interviews and document analysis with participant observation drew rules to probe into the system of meaning of these two grade four teachers. The researcher observed the teachers in action from October to March, and conducted informal and formal interviews to the end of May. She took field notes, and recorded classroom interaction and interviews with teachers. These data were analyzed on an ongoing basis in order to discover patterns and to formulate questions for further inquiry. Final analysis of the data was done once the field work and the interviews

were completed.

The insights generated from the data indicated that the two teachers tried to reproduce an environment similar to the first language one. However, spelling and grammar skills were not always studied in context. The choice and the planning of French language arts activities in a French immersion situation were influenced by a combination of factors. It seems that the child is central to all decisions and actions in these two classes. The teachers select and plan activities according to what they feel will answer children's needs and interests in second language acquisition, and according to what will help them to have a better understanding of themselves and the world around them. Other elements such as colleagues, parents, school administrators, and teaching material were also considered but only in the context of how they could benefit the child. Data further suggest that internal factors such as changes in their personal lives, personal soul searching for motives underlying their own pedagogy, and thoughtful discussions with colleagues influenced teachers in regard to changes in the two teachers' pedagogical approaches.

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

In Alberta many children receive instruction in a language other than English either to preserve their native language or to acquire a new one. These children are registered in an immersion program which means they receive at least 50% of their instruction in the target language and the remainder in English.

The recent increase in the number of children enrolled in French immersion programs makes educators and school administrators aware of the necessity of knowing more about the nature of teaching the target language, and the characteristics of the interaction between the learner, the teacher, and the environment (Dulay et al. 1982; Alberta Education, 1983: Tardif, 1987).

After having taught French Immersion for four years and acted as a consultant for three years in a French immersion program, the author of this study has been confronted by situations in which she was struggling with questions about the implications of teaching a second language. To get preliminary insights into what constitutes teaching a second language and what are the teachers' needs in a French Immersion setting, the writer conducted an exploratory study with approximately 20 elementary teachers in one school during monthly meetings, and with five other teachers during a series of class visits and interviews over a period of five months.

The outcomes of this first contact with teachers revealed that:

1. A large majority of teachers confided that teaching French immersion required more time in planning and organizing activities

than teaching English language arts. They had to adapt most of the activities presented in their learning resources because students lacked the necessary vocabulary.

2. Most of the teachers were not satisfied with their teaching because they encountered difficulties in covering the French language arts program of studies. According to them the program of studies in use was too heavy for immersion.
3. Some teachers complained that they did not have suitable resource materials in French to expand themes presented in their learning material. They mentioned that they did not use library facilities because of the students' limited knowledge of French. Students' reading abilities were below the level of language used in most of the French library books.
4. The majority of the teachers were satisfied when their students succeeded in filling in worksheets, in reading a paragraph aloud or in doing a dictation without mistakes.
5. Certain teachers were reluctant to conduct small group activities. Some said their class size was too big, and they did not have enough material for every group. Others said that when they organized such activities children did not respond properly. In some cases it was a source of misbehavior. The majority of teachers stated that children interpreted group activities as an opportunity to speak English during French lessons.
6. All teachers mentioned that they occasionally felt a need to improve their teaching methods. Some would like to individualize their teaching in order to satisfy students' needs. They were aware of the fact that students with lower abilities and the gifted

were left aside. They thought that learning centers might be a solution. Others would like to make better use of the community human resources and their educational materials such as pamphlets, posters, etc. Finally, others indicated a preference for creating activities more meaningful to the children, activities which call upon the children's creativity. Once or twice a year they planned activities such as writing a collective book, or organizing a play or a puppet show. They realized the positive effect on the children's interest in school. However, most of them declared that they did not know where to start and how to plan such activities on a regular basis. They mentioned that when they attended a conference or participated in an in-service workshop designed for English language arts teachers, they were all enthusiastic. They wanted to implement these new ideas or teaching strategies right away. But their enthusiasm vanished when they realized that it was not possible to implement them since their French immersion students lacked the vocabulary to participate in the activities as presented in the in-service workshop.

The results of this exploratory study raised several questions on the nature of French language arts activities in an immersion situation. If immersion teachers do not have a program of studies adapted to their students' needs, and if they do not have suitable resource material, on what basis do they select and plan activities in their class?

The preliminary findings indicated to the writer that there was a need for further study to shed light on the dynamics of teaching French language arts in a French immersion setting in order to provide

appropriate assistance to teachers.

In the course of this study, the researcher noticed some changes in the pedagogical approach of the two grade four teachers. In order to have a better understanding of the dynamic of change, she seeked to discover the relationships that exist between the factors that influence teachers' choice and planning, and the change produced in their teaching practice during the year.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to describe and explain the nature of French language arts activities in two immersion settings, the factors that influence these teachers in the choice and the planning of the French language arts activities, and to seek at establishing the relationships between these factors and the change produced in their pedagogical approach throughout the school year. The research questions, therefore, were:

1. What is the nature of French language arts activities in an immersion setting?
2. What are the factors that influence teachers in the choice and the planning of French language arts activities in an immersion situation?
3. What are the relationships between these factors and changes in the pedagogical approach of immersion teachers?

Significance of the Study

Research describing the nature of French language arts teaching in

an immersion situation from the teachers' point of view is very limited. It is hoped that a better understanding of what constitutes the French immersion teachers' task, a description of the factors that influence teaching French as a second language in an immersion setting, and their relationships with the pedagogical change produced throughout the year may:

1. Shed light on the dynamics of teaching a second language in an immersion situation,
2. Assist in devising effective teaching strategies that enhance children's second language acquisition,
3. Assist administrators and language arts consultants in providing adequate assistance to immersion teachers,
4. Lead to further research on what factors provide the best environment for second language acquisition.

Organization of the Thesis

In this study, chapter II provides an overview of the related literature and researches on the second language development and the key agents in French immersion programs.

The review of the literature on French immersion program indicates that there have been many studies on the evaluation of the program. However, there has been little done on the nature of teaching French language arts in this setting, and the factors that influence teachers' decisions and actions in their classroom. Shavelson and Stern (1981) have demonstrated that teachers' pedagogical thoughts, judgements, decisions, and behavior are influenced by a variety of internal and

external elements. The development of the language concept, parents' and school administrators' expectations, and teachers' training are some of the factors that seem to affect second language decision making in immersion.

The purpose of chapter III is to describe the principles taken into account when choosing the specific methodology underlying this study.

A current tendency in research on teaching is that in order to understand the nature of teaching in a particular situation, teachers' decisions and actions must be understood in relation to their behavior in the classroom context (Shavelson and Stern, 1981:450).

From a symbolic interactionist standpoint, human beings act toward their social world in light of their biographical situation and their stock of knowledge at hand. Teachers, in an immersion situation, refer to the meaning they have gained through the ongoing process of interpretation and definition of internal and external factors to analyze and judge situations; to plan and organize their actions in the classroom.

In an attempt to get insight into French immersion teaching from the teachers' point of view and to meet the requirements of the symbolic interactionist approach to research, the participant observational method was selected.

Participant observation, conducted in a natural setting, is a method that allows the researcher to document the nature of second language teaching in an immersion situation, and the elements underlying teachers' choices and planning. It allowed the researcher: (1) to participate in the experience of those being studies and to understand

the teachers' view of their own world; (2) to report the situational and temporal detail (Denzing, 1978; Miles and Huberman, 1984); and (3) to generate and analyse data while still pursuing the investigation.

This research method used simultaneousy with informal conversations, formal interviews and document analysis, draw rules of discovery and verifications congruent with the theoretical framework of the symbolic interactionism.

Chapter IV presents, in three sections, the interpretations made from the data analysis. The first section presents the teachers' personal histories and their interpretations of their teaching role and the French language arts activities. The second section describes the teachers' interpretations of the factors that influenced their choice and planning of daily activities. The third section reports on the relationships between these factors and the change in the two teachers' pedagogical approach when teaching in an immersion situation during one school year.

The final chapter describes the implications of this study on the second language teaching in an immersion setting.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCHES

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain the nature of French language arts activities in two immersion settings, the factors that influence these teachers in the choice and the planning of French language arts activities in an immersion situation, and to search for the relationship between these factors and the changes produced in their pedagogical approach throughout the school year. Some researchers have reported that teachers' pedagogical thoughts, judgements, decisions and actions are influenced by a variety of internal and external factors. For this review of literature the writer assumes that French immersion teachers must also be influenced by similar factors when selecting and planning French language arts activities.

In this chapter, the writer reports on factors that might influence teachers in a French immersion situation. The review of literature showed that there were few studies aimed at describing the nature of teaching a second language from the teachers' point of view. Most of the factors represented in the literature are derived from studies on the evaluation of French immersion programs and on surveys conducted with various people involved in it.

Second Language Development

There are two major currents which have influenced and still

influence the literature in the area of second language teaching. First, twenty years ago articles and teachers' workshops were oriented toward a grammatical description of the language, reflecting a concern with linguistic product. The theorists of this generation promoted methodologies which emphasized the explanation of grammar rules, the presentation of vocabulary in the form of a bilingual list or dialogue to memorize, and on exercises stressing the conscious control of language structure (grammar-translation). In the early sixties came audiolingual methods full of promises based mainly on the development of automatic patterns presented in dialogue. The dialogue practice was followed by drills such as repetition, substitution and transformation in order to organize sentences in new patterns. In some cases, the lesson included translation (Krashen, 1982:130).

There was also the Direct method promoting the acquisition of a second language by the inductive teaching of grammar. In this method, all classroom activities were conducted in the target language. The teachers asked questions based on students' interests but the main goal was grammar teaching through inducing the rules of the language. All errors were corrected and rules discussed and explained in the target language. According to Bourbeau-Walker (1984) this method failed because of the conditions under which teachers were asked to work. First, they were not adequately prepared to use that method and secondly, they did not have enough resource material to support their teaching.

To summarize, these methods have several points in common. They all suggest that language is an automatic behavior based on the skinnerian principle of "stimulus-response" (Mareschal, 1974). Language

is perceived as an object to master by conditioning and habit formation (Krashen, 1982). The complexity of its code is the only variable. The role of language and the learner's motivation and needs are ignored.

Then came researchers and authors who moved toward theories based on the communicative function of the language. For example, in the Natural Approach the goals of the course were semantic (Krashen, 1982). Teachers utilized themes already known by their students to build lessons. Classroom discussions endeavored to capture students' interests by focussing on familiar and useful information. However, there was a tendency to use certain structures more often and to assign grammar homework related to them (Krashen 1982:138).

Meanwhile, in the early sixties, the St. Lambert parents' group was not satisfied with the results of second language methods used in their schools at that time. The twenty-minute-a-day program was not sufficient to develop fluency in French. So they initiated an out-of-school French class. Then, through readings about language teaching and with the support of Drs. Penfield and Lambert, they set up an experimental early French class for anglophone children. After numerous requests the School Board agreed to initiate this project designed to promote functional bilingualism (Lambert, 1974). They developed a curriculum pattern for early French immersion. This "language bath," as called by the initiators, formed the basis for immersion programs almost everywhere in Canada (Stern, 1978:837).

The most important feature of the immersion program set up by the St. Lambert parents' group was that it recreated "a language learning situation which came close to duplicating the conditions for mother tongue learning" (Sweet, 1974:167). The second language was not viewed

as another subject in the curriculum, but as a mean through which the regular school subjects were taught (Genesee, 1985:541). The principle underlying this pedagogical approach was, as stated by Stern, "that much of the language is learned in the process of doing something while using it" (1984, p. 517).

Researchers, ministries of education, school administrators, and teachers concerned with second language acquisition followed this St. Lambert experiment with great interest. The program evaluation conducted by Lambert revealed that after seven years, children involved in this novel program had not suffered from either any native language or subject matter deficit, nor from any cognitive retardation. They increased their French language skills compared to students in a traditional French-as-a-second-language program. However, they were still slightly behind their French-speaking peers in French language proficiency (Swain, 1974; Lambert, 1974).

Many questions arose from these studies. Most of them were related to the process of learning a second language. Has this new approach in second language education changed the concept of language learning? Is it still perceived as a linguistic code to master? What is the importance attributed to meaning? A close look at timetables, teaching materials, methods used to evaluate students' progress, and the data provided by researchers in the early days of French immersion implementation may indicate what was the language development.

Most timetables (Wilton) suggest that the language is seen as an accumulation of different unrelated skills. When we look at the teaching material, the evaluation tools (CTBS and CAT) and the interpretation of research findings, it is evident that the emphasis

was put on the surface forms of both first and second language (grammar rules, spelling, vocabulary development, phonology and so on). But did these indicators really reflect the language concept held in the early seventies?

There are other signs that there is more than what is perceived at first in a school setting. For instance, this whole movement created by the implementation of immersion program raises questions. Sweet (1974) when comparing a core French and an immersion approach, noticed that the former was based on the linguistic code whereas the latter on the content. This fact led him to question his perception of language.

> "It would almost seem that language is the by-product of experience and meaning. Is it possible to conclude that language is a vehicle for transporting ideas and when it is treated as such, learning is more effective? In observing children, it would seem that they acquire meaning before they acquire language. They seem to be most adept at getting meaning out of the body movements, facial expressions, etc., which constitute the non-verbal code. Is it possible that the child is more meaning-oriented than language-oriented?" (1974: 167).

These questions about language, meaning, and learning in a primary language have already preoccupied theorists in the sixties. Nowadays researchers feel the need to go back to their theories to get insight in the area of second language learning. Skinner (1984), in his paper on access to meaning, has summarized the basic notions of thought, language and meaning elaborated by Piaget, Chomsky and Vygotsky. He has also described the influence their works have had on the elaboration of new theories on second language learning and especially on the notion of language proficiency.

From these theories, Skinner (1985) drew the relationship which

exists between language and thought, meaning and learning:

thought and language = meaning

change in meaning = learning (knowledge)

change in thought and language = learning

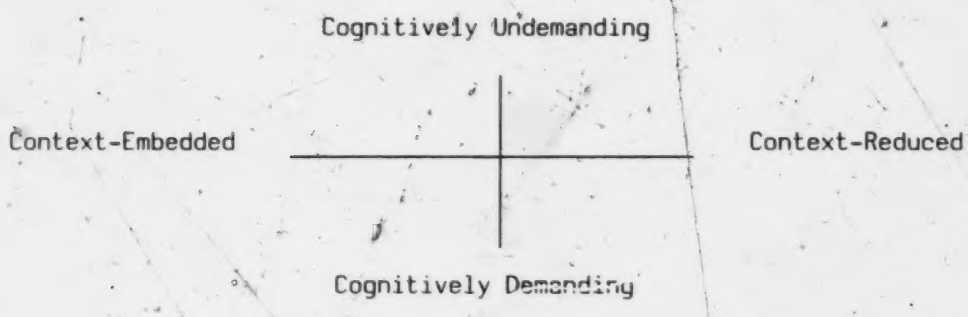
One can say that learning is a function of thought and language. These relationships led Skinner to conclude that as learning (knowledge) is a function of language, it is therefore limited by the language proficiency of the learner.

On his analysis of Cummins' work, Skinner (1985) has tried to demonstrate how Cummins came up with a definition of language proficiency related to academic performance (i.e., to the acquisition of knowledge). In his investigation of Spanish-speaking children, Cummins noticed that some children seemed to be fluent in a second school language but were encountering difficulties with academic skills. This observation led him to conclude that there must be something different between the way English is used in daily life and the way it is used in the classroom.

Cummins has combined his convictions about levels of language proficiency with the context in which the communication occurred. On one hand he has the natural setting, the daily life context, and, on the other hand he has the classroom context. He illustrated his understanding of the situation through Figure 1 (1983:131).

Figure 1

Range of Contextual Support and Degree of Cognitive Involvement in Communicative Activities



The horizontal continuum relates to the range of contextual support available for expressing and receiving meaning. On the left hand context-embedded refers to a situation in which the participants, in a face-to-face communication, can negotiate meaning in natural day life by means of elements intrinsic and extrinsic to the language. On the other hand, in the context-reduced situation, the communication is usually in written form and depends on the quality of the linguistic cues only. The context does not provide any paralinguistic features (gestures, facial expressions, intonation, etc.) or situational cues (home, class, streets, etc.) which might help the receiver.

The vertical continuum refers to the characteristics of the information to be processed to perform the activity. The participants, in a cognitively undemanding situation, will need little active cognitive involvement if they have already mastered the linguistic

tools to perform the task. On the other hand they will be engaged in a more active cognitive involvement if the task to be performed requires linguistic tools relatively new to them (cognitively demanding).

Cummins' findings in the area of second language acquisition began to have some implications on the educational system. His concept of language proficiency based on two factors, the context and the cognitive demand of an activity, raised the following research questions: What are the characteristics of French language development? What is the interplay between language development and the teacher's role? Are teachers in French immersion well prepared to create a suitable environment to foster language learning?

Genesee (1985) described an immersion program as being a pedagogical approach characterized by the following elements:

- an approach that tends to reproduce first language acquisition conditions,
- an approach in which students are engaged in meaningful and interesting communicative activities,
- an approach by which "they pick up the language skills they need to perform the tasks that compose school life" (p. 542),
- an approach in which "the effectiveness depends very much on the quality of the interaction between the teacher and the learner" (p. 543).

Are these characteristics respected in today's French immersion programs?

In their review of studies, Swain and Lapkin (1986) explained the grammatical weaknesses of immersion students as a result of the restricted linguistic input provided by teachers. This observation

corroborates Landry's statement that the quality of linguistic contacts in school influences the development of language competency. The weaknesses can also be attributed to the lack of opportunity for students to express themselves (Cummins, 1987). As reported by Cummins in a review of studies conducted by Allen and his colleagues "there is a higher proportion of teacher-led lessons and much less small group work in immersion programs than in many regu[illegible]glish programs" (1987:202). In other words, the weaknesses obse[illegible] when the students are in productive situations can be explained by the fact that in school, they are usually confined to a receptive role.

Cummins (1987) explained this teacher-centered interaction in class by the fact that teachers perceived themselves as transmitters of a body of knowledge and skills to the students. The "negotiation of meaning", which should be, according to Genesee (1985), a characteristic of the interaction between teacher and learners in an immersion program, is not likely to exist if teachers approach teaching as transmission of knowledge and skills to students.

In Alberta, the Faculté Saint-Jean of the University of Alberta and the Language Services Branch of Alberta Education were attentive to research input in the area of second language acquisition. They have followed with great interest the development of new theories and taken into account suggestions made by researchers in their attempt to find solutions to unresolved problems.

In 1983, Faculté Saint-Jean marked the graduation of first-class teachers from the Immersion Teacher Preparation program. From a program that offered few courses in second language teaching, the Faculté Saint-Jean developed three programs to meet the educational

needs in the actual social context. In addition to the basic courses preparing future teachers to fulfill their task, the Faculté Saint-Jean's teaching training programs aim at developing: (a) the French language proficiency, (b) the functional English language proficiency, and (c) the ability to promote the French Canadian culture. Programs also seek at preparing future teachers to face the immersion situation.

Alberta Education did not stay silent about French immersion. In 1984, the Language Services Branch conducted an extensive survey including all people involved with the French language in education. This survey provided them with some input leading to the reorganization of French language teaching. To answer the needs expressed in the survey, it was decided to develop two French language arts programs, one for francophones and on for immersion students. Prior to that, there was only one French language arts program used by the two groups. The objectives of the Language Services Branch were not only to develop two programs of studies but also to promote an interactionist pedagogy centered on the child and on communication (Alberta Education, 1987).

The Student Evaluation Branch of Alberta Education is now reconsidering exams for these programs. They are working on tests which will take into account the communicative approach underlying the French language arts programs for both francophone and immersion students.

To summarize, the concept of second language learning was greatly influenced by the initiation and implementation of French immersion programs throughout Canada. The evaluation of these programs lead researchers to describe an environment fostering second language acquisition. This pedagogical approach in language learning has been

taken into account in the elaboration of a new program of study for French as a second language in an immersion situation, and in the elaboration of a teacher training program.

Key Agents and their Concerns

Many people were involved in the initiation and implementation of the French immersion program in Canada. Parents have played an active role in their attempt to convince school boards to offer the program in their school district. During the implementation phase, school administrators, teachers and faculties of education had to face problems peculiar to the immersion situation.

Parents

As presented earlier, parents have played a key role in the establishment of French immersion programs. The St. Lambert parents' group started a movement followed by many other parents almost everywhere in Canada. According to Lambert (1974) and Genesee (1988) the socio-political events led Canadians to find an answer in the educational system to problems of bilingualism.

As the implementation of immersion programs was new in the country and was documented by intensive studies, parents made a special effort to be well informed. In order to do so, in 1977, they formed an association called Canadian Parents for French (CPF). Their main objectives are to inform parents of the latest findings in the second language area and to ensure each Canadian child accessibility in acquiring the French language and culture (Boyen, 1979).

In the early stages, the parents' expectations concentrated on the

acquisition of the French language without putting English language skills and academic progress in jeopardy. However, throughout the years the parents' motives have changed. For most of them the above objectives are still on their list but their primary motivation is moving toward extrinsic elements rather than toward the personal development of their child. Some parents perceive the immersion program as a challenge for their bright child. For others it is the job opportunites offered by bilingualism which attract them. Some authors even go as far as saying that some parents are succumbing to social pressures. They enroll their child into such programs because their friends and neighbors did so (Rebuffot 1988). Maynard (1987) mentioned that some parents believe it is the best education their tax dollars can buy.

In 1976, Duhamel reported in an analysis of parents open-ended comments solicited by school administrators that "some respondents felt that the children in immersion programs were being neglected by adults anxious to benefit themselves" (p. 33). Ten years later a similar comment was made by Bibeau (Lebrun, 1988). Parents seem to be attracted by the social prestige of the program.

As a result, neither children, nor parents are inclined to look for opportunities to use French in their community even if such occasions exist (Genesee, 1988). In a book published by Canadian Parents for French, Gibson advised parents who, after receiving all possible information, are not convinced about the value of bilingualism in Canada to not choose the immersion program option for their children (1985:13).

Regardless of what has been said and written about parents'

attitudes in general, parents have hopes and concerns about the immersion program. The most important element for them is to provide the best education for their child. As mentioned by McGillivray (1979), parents consider their child fortunate to be involved in such a program but they are also worried about their child's progress. This is reflected in their constant need for reassurance and advice on the kind of help they can provide even though they do not speak the target language.

In Alberta, a survey conducted by the Language Services Branch of Alberta Education (1986), revealed that parents of immersion students participate actively in school activities. Most parents attend CPF meetings and participate in school activities such as the Christmas concert, carnival, etc. The school administration can also count on them for special fund-raising projects.

When asked what was their opinion about the program, parents said that it would benefit their child in the following domains:

- cultural aspects (tolerance toward other cultures),
- the advantage of being or becoming bilingual,
- providing the child with a challenge,
- promoting self-esteem.

They added that the program is effective in its aims. They are satisfied with their child's progress. According to them, their children have developed an interest for French. They like to go to school and participate in school activities. However, they added that they would like to see some improvements, especially in the following areas:

- more oral practice in everyday life situations,

- more remedial help within the program as opposed to tutorial help,
- more adequate materials.

They also mentioned that they would like to have more information about the program, especially concerning the method of teaching reading. In fact, surveyors have noticed that parents' answers reflected a lack of information regarding the time allocation for French instruction, the timing of the introduction of the English language arts program, the teachers' responsibilities and tasks, the teaching strategies in immersion, the exams and other academic subjects.

An important concern for parents is the teachers' abilities to teach. Some of them are concerned about the fact that the sudden increase in French immersion popularity has led school administrators to hire whoever can speak French, regardless of their teaching and linguistic competence (Duhamel, 1976; Maynard, 1987). As mentioned by Duhamel (1976), McGillivray (1985) and Burns (1987) parents want well trained teachers. "French immersion teachers should also be primary specialists if teaching in the primary division" (Burns 1987:59).

According to parents, teachers should: (a) master the French language like native speakers and be representative of the French culture, (b) be fluent in English in order to communicate adequately with parents during formal and informal meetings, and (c) understand second language development. And, as suggested by Wightman (1976) in an article for CPF, teachers should be ready to answer "clandestine phone calls" from parents worried about their child's reactions to the new situation.

Parents' expectations and comments are indicative of the particu-

larities of the French immersion program. Individuals involved in it must face situations not typical of the regular program.

School Administrators

School administrators also have hopes and concerns about the immersion program. First, they all want to offer a program which will attain educational goals. Secondly, they all want to satisfy parents' demands regarding the characteristics of the immersion program chosen (early or late immersion, the amount of French language instruction, etc.). To succeed, they must face problems unique to the French immersion program.

According to McGillivray (1979) staffing immersion classes is among one of the most difficult problems facing the principal of an immersion school (p. 107). This point of view is also reflected in the Manitoba Report (1983) and in the Alberta Education survey (1986). This concern corroborates the tendency to say that the teacher is a key person to ensure the success of an immersion program.

In Alberta, school principals seem very empathetic toward French immersion teachers. In their comments in the survey conducted by Alberta Education (1986) they mentioned that the pressure exerted on teachers by parents with children in immersion goes beyond what is experienced by teachers in the regular program. They explained the difference by the fact that parents, in order to follow their child's progress and to make sure they made the proper choice, will come to school and observe classroom activities more often than other parents. Administrators would like the parents' presence to be more supportive to the teachers' action in class.

A second factor which seems to differentiate French immersion teachers' task from those of teaching in the regular English program is the inadequacy of the material in use. According to school principals, it is common to see teachers spending hours looking for suitable material to develop a theme, translating documents or part of them, and making photocopies because of the lack of instructional and resource material suitably adapted to the situation.

A third factor which differentiates teachers' task is the absence of specialists. In most cases, the immersion program is too limited to hire specialist trained to help students encountering learning difficulties. Teachers are left to themselves, without knowing exactly how to remediate learning problems, especially in reading.

School principals in Alberta are aware that teachers well prepared to teach a second language in an immersion setting are not numerous. They count on the Faculté Saint-Jean of the University of Alberta and other universities in the province to solve the problem on a long-term basis.

Faculties of Education

Part of the solution to the increasing problem of staffing immersion classes depends on the universities' abilities to take up the challenge. Studies revealed that they are not prepared to face this situation. Thirty-six percent of faculties of education throughout the country offer one or more courses to prepare future immersion teachers (Obadia, 1984). In many cases it is not sufficient to provide an adequate preparation. Apparently, the delay in responding to the demand is due to the absence of theory behind immersion teaching (Calvé

as reported by Tardif, 1985).

According to Tardif (1985) future teachers should be prepared to face a dual task: "how to teach a content area, and also how to integrate second language learning and teaching across the various curriculum areas" (p. 109).

The immersion teacher education program proposed by Tardif is based on two elements:

- the process of becoming an immersion teacher, and
- the necessary content to become an immersion teacher.

The process of becoming an immersion teacher, as described by Tardif (1985) seemed to be similar to the one lived by the children at school. Student teachers should be immersed into the target language and experience the integration of language across the curriculum. The understanding of their own preconceptions and beliefs toward the target language should also be part of the program. This approach should help future teachers to understand childrens' and parents' beliefs and attitudes toward second language learning experience (p. 112). Another element in the process hould be to prepare the immersion teacher "to play the role of innovator in curriculum and evaluation. Though immersion teachers are expected to implement the same curriculum as the one used in English programs, they must often extensively adapt these curricula to meet the linguistic abilities of their students. This involves either finding appropriate resource material or adapting existing material. (...) This implies that the education of the immersion teacher must stress the process of reflection, critical thinking and creativity (p. 111). And finally, the program should assess the need for practice teaching in an immersion classroom.

The specific components of an immersion teacher education program should be divided into three elements:

- language proficiency and the cultural dimension of the language to teach,
- the theory underlying first and second language acquisition,
- and, the approach underlying second language teaching in an immersion program (Tardif, 1985).

Such program should also aim at developing the awareness of the future teachers to the importance of a healthy relationship between home and school. It should encourage them to keep an eye on the latest information in the area of second language learning and bilingualism; "An understanding of the factors which bear on successful language learning can aid teachers in their professional roles of advice-givers, and their implications for second language teaching" (Tardif, 1985:114).

The immersion teacher training program as described by Tardif shows the complexity of the teacher's task in this setting.

Teachers

A study (Beaulieu, 1980) on immersion teachers showed that few teachers have taken courses in the area of second language learning and teaching. They have underlined their lack of information in second language learning. Many of them were not satisfied with their undergraduate studies. They felt they were not prepared to face the immersion classroom situation. According to them, the inter-classroom visits were very helpful. They benefit from exchanging ideas and planning a unit with colleagues. Their main concern was the availabi-

lity of the learning and teaching material.

A study conducted by Professor T. Byrne for the benefit of Faculté Saint-Jean (Tardif, 1984), shows that the 120 teachers who participated in this study identify the following characteristics as being particularly important for French immersion teachers.

- French language competency,
- knowledge of the French culture,
- knowledge of the French and English language structure.

They also indicated that competent teachers should have developed particular personal qualities which will facilitate relationships with students and parents. They should also be prepared to select content and to develop curriculum material which will foster language skills.

In a conference on bilingual immersion education (1988), two immersion teachers expressed similar comments. They mentioned that "teachers and schools still have difficulties obtaining adequate materials for instructional purposes. Libraries have difficulty obtaining materials for students to be able to read at a suitable level in French" (p. 9). After twenty years of immersion throughout Canada the concern for suitable material for this clientele still exists.

A problem often raised by French immersion teachers is the difficulty of assessing the childrens' progress. According to them, the evaluation tools provided are not representative of second language acquisition in an immersion setting. The most common test used to evaluate language proficiency was designed for francophone students in Manitoba. Some teachers were shocked to see researchers using these results to compare children from two different learning situations and backgrounds. Some others were firmly opposed to it as there was a

discrepancy between the way children were taught and the way they were evaluated.

Children

What about the children? How do they perceive their schooling? What do they have to say about classroom activities? In an Alberta Education survey (1986), children at the upper elementary level indicated that only 17% percent of them are enrolled in a French immersion program solely because of their parents' choice. For the others, it is a shared decision. These children like to learn French and find it important. In general they are satisfied with their school grades in French language arts.

Results show that they like "free reading periods", and a large majority indicated that they would like to have more time to read at school. In the survey, almost half of them said that they often read French materials other than what was required for school activities. According to them, the school library book selection is appropriate for their needs. They also like the material used in class.

When asked if they had opportunities to work in small groups, 21% answered yes "often" and 75% "sometimes". Among those who said they did not like French, most of them mentioned they would like it better if they had more opportunities to work in small groups.

Chapter Summary

People involved in immersion programs seem to have different demands and expectations of it. Even if some studies report that some parents are more concerned with their own social status, most of them

will put the child first. They want the best for their child. They do not limit their efforts to get the immersion program they want.

With the implementation of the French immersion program, school boards and school administrators have to face new problems in order to offer high quality education. Staffing their school with qualified teachers seems to be their biggest problem.

The faculties of education recognized that they were not ready to answer the increasing demand for immersion teachers. However, with the experience gained throughout the years, some universities are planning courses and programs designed to prepare future immersion teachers.

Teachers already involved in an immersion program have to face problems peculiar to their situation. The major one seems to be the difficulties in finding suitable instructional and resource materials to overcome the students' lack of vocabulary.

A survey throughout Alberta has shown that children enrolled in an immersion program are willing to learn French. They consider it as being important for them.

From this review of literature and researches, one can draw the following conclusion: all people involved in the immersion program have a common goal, they all want to increase the quality of educational opportunities in order to better meet children's needs.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the principles taken into account when choosing the specific methodology to use in this study. It also describes the methods and procedures used for exploring the nature of French language arts activities in two immersion settings, the factors on which two teachers base their goals, decisions and actions, and the relationship that exist between these factors and the changes produced throughout the year.

Among research methodologies, naturalistic inquiry was seen as the one best enabling the researcher to explore and uncover second language teachers' everyday realities in an immersion situation.

The Symbolic Interactionist Approach

The symbolic interactionist approach as perceived by social psychologists and sociologists seems appropriate for this study. It attempts to explain human behavior in terms of meaning. This inquiry-oriented approach is aimed at developing "theory that accounts for behavior rather than at developing descriptions of behavior with the goal of verifying theory" (Glasser in Jacob, 1987:31).

The central notion of symbolic interactionist theory is based on Mead's perception of the nature of human society, expressed in Blumer's work (Blumer, 1965-66). The point of departure is that the human being is perceived as an actor in possession of a self. This possession provides him with a reflexive or self-interacting mechanism which

enables him to analyze and evaluate the meaning of his social world. This analysis is done in light of his biographical situation and his stock of knowledge at hand in reference to the situation in which he is placed and, the intended action (Blumer, 1965-66; Jacob, 1988:19). This self-interaction and interaction with the environment is called symbolic because it involves an interpretation of the situation (Delamont, 1976).

Another particularity of human existence as seen by symbolic interactionists is that the self is described as a dynamic process. A human being is continually constructing the world around him (Blumer, 1965-66; Delamont, 1976:23; Jacob, 1988:19). These interpretations are the basis for pursuing a line of action while coping with the world.

Joint Action

In symbolic interaction, human association with others is defined as being a dual process between interpretation and definition. "Through this process the participants fit their own acts to the ongoing acts of one another and guide others in doing so" (Blumer, 1965-66:537). For each situation resulting from an interaction with the environment, the interpretive process consists in (1) analyzing, (2) evaluating the situation, (3) adjusting one's own intentions, feelings, attitudes and (4) judging the appropriateness of the outcome to the group's norms and values. The basis for interpretation rests on the fonded experience of life, built on previous interaction. The definition gained through this process will be taken into account for subsequent interpretations.

Social Object and Social World

As stated by Blumer and his followers, meanings are not intrinsic to any objects, they are social products. It is through this ongoing interactive process with objects and others that human beings acquire meaning and get prepared to act on it. This meaning acquisition will be reflected in each of their subsequent interactions with objects and others.

The world in which each human being acts will be the result of meanings acquired through his interaction with the environment. This ongoing interactive process will produce a change in meaning for the people involved in it, and consequently, a change in their social world.

Research Method

The research method underlying this theoretical framework must aim at describing the participants' everyday life activities (Jacob 1987). To truly document human behavior in term of meaning, researchers must be closely involved with the persons, situations, and social groups under discussion. They must aim at developing a complete picture of the essential structure of daily life. In order to achieve this, they must study the paramount reality of everyday life.

The researcher must go behind the observable features of what is directly observable. The subject's speech, his behavioral acts and the unfolding career of a joint act will reveal the parts of the self as a social object, in the social process. They must "attempt entry into the private worlds of self-conversations for here is where the early

phases of all joint acts are constructed" (Denzin, 1978:14).

One of the principles underlying the symbolic interactionist approach to research is the principle of subjectivity (Denzin, 1978). Its first application derives from the meaning that participants confers on their own actions; the way they interpret their own and each other's behavior. The second application is attributed to the investigator. To reconstruct the meaning participants bestow upon their own action in a given situation, the investigator needs to rely upon his own understanding of the situation.

In an attempt to meet the requirements of the symbolic interactionist approach and to get insight into the French immersion teaching situation from the subjects' point of view, the participant observational method was selected. The following section of this chapter describes the procedures, methods and techniques used by the researcher to explore the French immersion situation.

Selection of Informants

The primary characteristic of good informants is their representativeness of the culture under study (Agar, 1980; Becker, 1978). Those who are currently involved in the situation usually use their knowledge to guide their actions (Spradley, 1979). Another characteristic is their availability. When selecting informants, the researcher must make explicit the time requirements needed to try to avoid any participant withdrawal during the course of the research.

The procedure used to find volunteer informants for this study was done by taking into account the characteristics described earlier. It began several months prior to the field work. During the exploratory

study, already mentioned in Chapter I, I met colleagues of the teachers involved. This first encounter provided me with a network of possible research informants. However, for the benefit of the project it was necessary to select two teachers with the following characteristics: a) same grade level, b) similar teacher training, c) similar teaching experience, (d) similar school district, school, and class size in order to minimize the effect of variables.

In June, I personally contacted two teachers from two different school districts who were representative of these criteria. I informed them that I was pursuing an investigation of the French immersion situation and that I was looking for two teachers interested in participating in the project. I explained to them the purpose of the study and what it implied. I mentioned that I wanted to observe them in their classrooms over a long period of time during the next school year. I stressed the fact that my presence in their class should not affect their daily routine. Both teachers seemed willing to cooperate.

Volunteers' Acceptance

At the beginning of the school year, I contacted these two teachers. I reformulated my request and stressed the fact that they could withdraw at any time. They agreed to participate in the project and agreed to a first meeting. It was decided that the best time to begin would be at the end of September in order to give them the opportunity to first get acquainted with their class.

During the meeting with the first teacher, hereinafter referred to as Jan, I visited her class and we discussed the purpose of the study and the research design. I explained to her why the participant

observational approach was chosen. I asked her permission to use a small tape recorder to complement my field notes. I took this opportunity to tell her that her name and the school name would remain anonymous. Then we discussed an appropriate time for observation. During this observation period it was possible to observe French language arts, and a few science and math lessons. I mentioned that after Christmas I would like to spend a full week in her class in order to see how activities were related together. She understood the situation and did not see any inconvenience in this particular request. We concluded by setting a tentative schedule for the next month.

Some days later, I met the second teacher, hereinafter referred to as Lucie. I followed basically the same procedure with her as for the first teacher. Lucie expressed her willingness to participate in this project by saying that it would provide her with an opportunity to discuss and reflect upon what she was doing in class. We made arrangements for weekly visits. I reiterated my willingness to spend a week in her class after Christmas.

Gaining Entry

As expressed by Spradley (1980), in some situations it is necessary to get permission to conduct a study. Some schools require the permission of the school board. Others limit their requirement to the school principal and the teacher directly involved. In some rare occasions, the researcher will have to get parents' permission.

In both cases, I explained that I would contact the school principal in order to get permission to conduct the study. I added that, if they agreed, I would also inform the parents about the general

purpose of my visit into their children's class.

During the meeting with Jan's school principal and Lucie's vice-principal, I stated the purpose of the study, the procedures used to generate data, and the role of each teacher. They reiterated their support of this project and seemed proud to have teachers involved in it.

Research Schedule

The observation schedule arranged with the two grade four teachers took into account the restrictions imposed by the school situation. During my visits, from October to March, the two teachers agreed to spend some time with me before and after each classroom observation. They used this occasion to explain the objective of the lesson, the activity in which the children would be involved, and to show me the material they would use. After the lesson they expressed their feelings about what they had experienced, and the way they perceived the children's participation.

Participant Observation

Many social scientists will advise their students to clearly define the problem and its characteristics before selecting a method that matches the study (Shulman, 1981; Smith, 1979; Wilson, 1977). In order to study the nature of the French immersion situation and its implications for the teachers' goals, feelings, and actions, it was recommended to select a method that allowed an exploration of the everyday world of interaction. According to Denzin (1978) participant observation method represents the investigator's commitment to participate as closely as possible in the experience of those involved

in the situation under consideration. It requires the researcher to go into the field and to use different methods to study the situation at hand. Direct participation in the group's activities, informal and formal interviews, document analysis, and introspection are methods recognized by naturalistic inquirers for probing the structure of everyday life (Denzin, 1978).

Spradley (1980) has described a wide range of participant observers' involvement in the field. The one chosen for this study is associated with passive participation; i.e., limited participation or interaction with the social group. As I explained to the teachers, I did not want them to change anything in their daily routine because of my presence.

My participation in the classroom was limited to the translation of unknown words in French or to act as an audience in a rehearsal for an oral presentation. Sometimes, I helped the children with their written work. I volunteered my services to edit children's text with individual authors, sharing the task with the teacher.

Data Collection

Data collection consists of an accumulation of information on the social situation. The task of the fieldworker is the search for meaning. The information gathered can take various forms such as field notes, tape recording, pictures, artifacts, etc., (Spradley, 1980). Agar (1980) considers field notes as a record (1) of what was observed and said, (2) of the interpretations of the situation as experienced by the researcher, and (3) of suggestions for further information to be sought.

Field Notes

Each time I went to observe a group I brought along with me a tape recorder and some paper to take notes. I usually began by making entries regarding the teacher's name, date, time, and curriculum subject. Then I wrote any change in the setting. My field notes were divided into two columns: (1) observation with the language used by the people in the social situation, and their actions; (2) ideas, general comments, questions raised while observing. However, I had to limit the content of the second column as I did not want to influence the teachers with my personal comments when they were looking at my notes. I usually noted these at home when reading what I had written at school. I also had the opportunity to expand my comments while transcribing the audio-tapes.

Interviews

For Spradley (1980) questions and answers in an interview should originate from the social situation under consideration. During a face-to-face conversation, the interviewer elicits information on the social context, in various ways.

During informal interviews, which take place whenever a conversation is entered into with informants, the investigators simply ask questions appropriate to the social situation (Spradley, 1980). There are no pre-arranged questions, the conversation goes wherever the informants lead it. Sometimes, informal questions form the investigator will encourage the informant to provide more details about daily life (Agar, 1980). When researchers develop a sense of what information is needed, they use these informal situations to test their

hypotheses (Denzin, 1978). In each cases, the observation and interview sequences interact with each other; the former providing questions for the latter and vice versa (Agar, 1980).

Investigators usually make pre-arrangements with the informant when requesting a formal interview. This kind of interview can be used (1) to get information on subjects' motivation for actions, (2) to test data for accuracy, (3) to clarify the informant's interpretation of events, (4) to check when data do not match, and (5) to generate new data (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

As LeCompte & Goetz (1982) affirm, participants may lie, omit relevant data or misrepresent their claims (p. 46), and provide different answers during subsequent interview. Pelto & Pelto (1981) interpret this situation by saying that: the social characteristics, the style of presentation of self, and other qualities of the interviewer have important effects on the persons being interviewed (1981:74). In order to avoid these problems, it is recommended that the interview be closely integrated with participant observation (Pelto & Pelto, 1981) and that the investigator spends sufficient time in the field to reduce artificial responses and behavior (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

As mentioned earlier, I did take time to discuss with the teachers before and after the observation session. These interactions can be considered as informal interviews as I did not have any pre-determined questions. As I had written some questions raised during the observation period, teachers answered questions while reading my notes. Most of the time the conversation was oriented toward events that had just happened in class, on the teachers' own questions and feelings with regard with what they were doing, and on their relationships to the

children and their colleagues.

Most of these conversations were tape-recorded. When we were walking in the hallways or when there were other teachers involved in the discussion, I did not used the tape recorder. Sometimes after these particular interactions, I asked the teachers to recall what was said in order to record it as accurately as possible. I also encountered situations in which they asked me to turn off the recorder because they felt that what they had to say was not ethical in regard to their profession. I always respected their decisions.

In the course of the research, I conducted three formal interviews with Jan and four with Lucie. On each occasion we selected a specific period of time. Each time I began the formal interview by using questions generated by data gathered during observation sessions and informal conversations.

All interviews were transcribed and used to generate more questions, to find recurrent topics and patterns.

Document Analysis

According to Spradley, when studying a culture, the investigators must pay attention to the artifacts and natural objects. They must go beyond the primary fact to discover what meaning people assign to these objects (1980:7). In symbolic interactionism, the nature of an object is construed by the meaning it has for a person. It is also said that people act toward objects on the basis of the meaning of the objects for them (Blumer, 1965-66:539).

Documents such as readers, workbooks, and library books were studied in the social context. Bulletin boards, handmade posters, and

song books were taken into account. Teacher's guide books, curriculum guides, teacher's daily plan book and the daily schedule were investigated on the basis of the importance attached to them by the teachers.

Personal Diary

Our observations are influenced by our interest and expertise. It is the investigators' responsibility to become aware of his/her own strengths and weaknesses in observational style (Pelto & Pelto, 1981:70) and to take measures to ensure accuracy of recall. Personal involvement such as feelings, reactions to a situation will also have to be taken into account. Rosalie Wax (cited in Willcott 1974:119) goes as far as asking the investigators to report how they were changed by the fieldwork experience. Agar (1981) suggests that a personal diary be kept to record the investigators' perceptions of their work in the field and of the sense attached to the research itself.

I reserved pages for personal notes. I wrote my thoughts, questions and feelings about what was going on, my reactions to the activities, and my perception of people involved in the situation.

We often hear that people say one thing and do something else. While conducting this study I never challenged the teachers' words. I prefered to base my relationship with these two teachers "on the assumption that what people say and do is consciously and unconsciously shaped by the social situation (Wilson, 1977:254). In the course of the study I tried to develop a rapport founded on trust and honesty. I always attempted to show great respect for what the teachers were doing in class, for their choices in planning the activities and for their attitudes toward the children.

I also took into account one of the principles underlying symbolic interactionism: the human being is a self in process.

When I faced a situation in which a teacher said something and did something else, I always considered it my duty to find out what made her change her mind. I was rewarded by the interest and the value they have attached to this study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the link between the theoretical and methodological perspective of symbolic interactionism which was used in this study on two immersion settings. It also described how the researcher made her entry into the field, and how she gathered the information which became the basis of her analysis.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The purpose of this study is to describe and explain the nature of French language arts activities in two immersion setting, the factors on which these two teachers base their choice and planning of daily activities in their classes, and the relationship between these factors and the changes in the two teachers' pedagogical approach during the school year.

The central thesis of this chapter is that French immersion teachers are influenced by an interplay of various factors which they take into account when planning their teaching. From a symbolic interactionism perspective, the two teachers' definition of second language teaching in a French immersion setting is the result of a dual process between interpretation and definition of the situation. The basis for this interpretation rests on the experience acquired during previous interactions. The definition gained through this process shapes subsequent interpretations of the situation. Hence, the way these two teachers plan their actions depends on how they have analyzed and evaluated the French immersion situation, and on how they have adjusted their intentions, feelings, and attitudes to external demands.

In this chapter, the interpretations made from the data analysis are presented in three sections. The first section presents the teachers' personal histories, providing the background that affected their interpretation of their teaching role, and of French language arts teaching. The second section describes the teachers' interpreta-

tion of the factors that influence their choice and planning of daily activities. Factors such as people involved in the situation, and the environmental setting in which they work reveal how they try to fit their decisions into daily activities. The third section reports on the relationship between these factors and the change in the two teachers' pedagogical approach when teaching French in an immersion situation during one school year.

Teachers' Background and Teaching Experiences

Teachers' Biographies

Jan's Biography

Jan was born and raised in a bilingual rural community in Alberta. She cannot remember how she learned the two official languages. It was a natural process. Her parents were both francophones and they have always spoken French at home. She learned English by being in contact with neighbors and fellow students at school. She attended bilingual elementary and secondary schools which offered subjects in French. Jan always enjoyed going to school. She never encountered difficulties in learning French. She was good in spelling. However, French lessons were perceived as a series of drills on grammar and conjugation, interrupted by reading activities. She did not consider these lessons as very pleasant.

Jan registered in a B.Ed. program at the Faculté Saint-Jean. She said that university classes did not prepare her to face the classroom situation. She took courses because they were mandatory. She considered them a waste of time. The content was too broad; there was

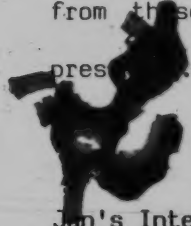
not enough specific information on how to deal with classroom reality. Even though student practicum was aimed toward this objective, she said that, since it was not her own class, she did not feel very involved in classroom life. It was only when she signed her first contract in early January of the fourth year of her university program that she really got interested in her studies. She knew at that time that she would teach in grade 2. Only then did her Early Childhood Education classes become meaningful and purposeful.

Lucie's Biography

Lucie grew up in an urban francophone community in Québec. She attended a private school which offered classes in French only. English was taught as a second language, one hour per day, from grade eight to twelve. The emphasis was on comprehension, especially on reading comprehension. She really learned English in a meaningful way only when she moved to Alberta to teach. Lucie does not consider her schooling a very pleasant period. According to her there was no room for her to express her creativity. French lessons stressed the grammatical aspect of the language through the memorization of grammar rules and verb contests. She had tutorial help to overcome her problems in spelling and writing. She had to spend hours after school for these extra lessons.

Lucie went to college and university in Québec. She registered in a B.Ed. Before coming to Alberta, Lucie taught French as a second language to adults for over six years. She found that experience very pleasant as she did not have to follow any particular instructional method. She said that her approach was based on the adults' needs.

When Lucie moved to Alberta, the provincial authorities did not recognize all her studies. She had to take summer courses at the Faculté Saint-Jean to get an Alberta teaching certificate. She considered these classes as not very appropriate to prepare future teachers. She was disappointed by professors who were caught by the system, "Ils parlaient de pédagogie ouverte en pleine pédagogie fermée." She said that in spite of everything, she was able to benefit from these courses because she was willing to go beyond what was pres[illegible].



Interpretations of their Teaching Role

Jan's Interpretations of her Teaching Role

During the research project, Jan was in her fifth year of teaching. She had taught grade two for three years and kindergarten for one year. She considered her role as teacher as very important. She believed that she was making a difference in her students' lives by being a good model of Christian life, by developing a value system promoting respect for others, fairness, honesty, etc. "Pour moi c'est très enrichissant parce que je fais du bien dans le monde."

Jan worked with students at developing respect for each other and fairness for all. She tried to be a good example of a person who cares about every individual. She treated each of them according to what she thought was best for everyone. The child with learning difficulties was given as much attention as the brillant one. An observer could see it through her daily action and comments, and through children's reactions in particular situations.

Children in Jan's class had the opportunity to work in small

groups. According to her, it allowed children to learn to get organized and to learn from each other. Most of the time they chose their partners. During these times, Jan moved from one group to the other, helping those who had difficulties and encouraging the others to pursue their task. Children always had the opportunity to ask for assistance from a classmate, even if the activity was designed to be done alone, "Si je vois qu'ils travaillent vraiment là, ça ne me dérange pas. Ils peuvent parler. Mais s'ils s'amusent c'est différent."

Some activities were aimed at developing the children's sense of responsability. Routine tasks were distributed among children. They were all responsible for decorating the bulletin board when it was their turn to introduce themselves to the class. It was their responsibility to make sure that the letters to their pen pals would be completed on time. She also lead them to make decisions with regard to the organization of classroom activities.

Jan considered herself very patient and stated that she loved children. As her family is of great value to her, she wanted to know as much as possible about her students' family situations. She liked to include her husband and her two children in classroom discussion. It seemed to add another dimension of herself to the classroom. She wanted her students to see her as she was, with feelings and emotions, with strengths and weaknesses.

Lucie's Interpretations of her Teaching Role

Lucie had taught French as a second language to adults for six years. She found that experience very pleasant as she did not have to

follow any particular method. She said that her approach was based on the adults' needs. She enjoyed the human aspect of her teaching job. She was also in her fifth year of teaching at the elementary level. She taught a grade one and two class for three years, and grade three for a year. Lucie saw herself as a guide, "Moi j'ai une richesse, les enfants ont leur richesse, puis on parle vraiment enseignement, tout le monde s'enseigne." She learned from children. They provided her with ideas on which she based her actions in class, "J'essaie d'être constamment aux aguêts, de voir ce que les enfants vont me dire, de partir de leurs connaissances." She used this information to build a framework within which children developed themselves. However, she was conscious that, even if she wanted to respect each child, she tended to organize things in the classroom. She felt a need for structure, aimed at developing activities for the benefit of all individuals involved, "Je leur apprends à fonctionner en fonction de vingt-trois personnes parce qu'on est vingt-trois en tout."

According to Lucie's own experience, children needed this kind of structure. Otherwise they become disoriented. They needed someone to bring them back to their objective, to help them in finding their limits, "On doit les aider à contrôler ça. C'est trouver l'équilibre dans tout ce qu'ils font." During the course of the year she learned about the individual strengths and weaknesses of their personality. She respected each of them and expected them to do so with each other.

Lucie's main objective was that she wanted children to intensively live the present, to marvel at what was going on. True involvement, intensity was typical. "Tu es en train de danser, là tout ton corps doit vibrer à la danse." She consciously gave part of herself as she

also participated intensely in the activities. "Je recherche énormément le fond de tout. Alors comme je vis intensément dans ma vie, à chaque fois qu'y se présente un exercice où l'enfant peut se révéler vraiment c'est certain que je vais accaparer ça."

Every day, Lucie tried to create an atmosphere in which a range of various activities would take place. This atmosphere depended on the topic under discussion. The more the topic was closely related to children's own experience and their social development, the more she wanted to be included in the discussion. For example, small group work and discussion were usually used when topic was impersonal, of public knowledge. However, when she introduced a new song, poem, or story dealing with personal concerns such as friendship, acceptance of others, etc., they usually discussed it in a large group. As she said, these topics were very important for her and she did not want to miss anything. "Il me révèle d'eux-même et si la conversation se fait entre petits groupes pour des choses aussi profondes, il y a des éléments qui vont m'échapper." When the conversation became too private, Lucie invited them to write down their thoughts. According to her, it is her best means to see their inner thoughts without having the children feel too nervous about what they had to say or being influenced by others. It also allowed everybody to express themselves without being limited by the amount of time allocated.

These activities contributed to developing close relationships between Lucie and her students. Letters sent through the class mailbox system were a tangible proof of it. Children used the system as a means to initiate talk on personal matters or class problems.

Humor was part of daily life. Lucie used it to motivate children,

to sustain interest and to convey various messages. She did not only use a humorous vocabulary but also paralinguistic cues such as gestures, mime and intonation to reach her goal. She did not fear involving students in situations high in excitement. Children had already proven to her that they could calm down again when asked. It was important for her that children could experience a variety of feelings in order to know themselves better.

French Language Arts Activities in Class

Activities in Jan's class

In Jan's class, activities gravitated toward topics related to children's own lives. According to her, themes developed in class had to be relevant to her students if she wanted them to participate thoroughly. She remembered French classes when she was at the elementary level. It was perceived as a series of grammar exercises, conjugations. She did not want her students to experience the same.

Two particular events helped Jan to change her perception of French language arts lessons. First, she was amazed to discover how grade four students could hold a conversation in French. After having taught children in kindergarten with very limited French vocabulary, she could not imagine how skilled they could become at expressing themselves orally within a few years.

The second important fact was the teaching material prescribed in the French language arts program. When Jan taught in grade two, she used learning material which, according to her, was very limited. It was difficult for her to make choices as lesson presentation had been predetermined. She found that the new material offered more opportuni-

ties to teachers to choose themes according to the children's interest, "J'aime vraiment ce programme-là. C'est vraiment à leur niveau... ça respecte vraiment l'enfant." She mentioned that at the beginning of the school year it was not easy to plan activities. She had to go back and forth between the student's book and the teacher's resource material. But once she became accustomed to it, it opened room for enriching activities, "Il y a plusieurs thèmes où on a fait autre chose avec la même idée." She used the openess of the material to adapt activities to children's needs and interests.

Family and childhood were important to Jan. At the beginning of the school year she selected themes related to these two notions. Children had the opportunity to express themselves on topics such as the people living with them, their most precious belongings, their friends, etc. Once a week one child was invited to talk about himself, his family and important events in his life. The main objective of these activities was to get to know each other.

Children were very interested in talking about themselves. They were proud to bring photos, toys and books to class. For Jan these little things were an endless source of information. She used them to select and adapt activities presented in the prescribed material, to provoke children's interest, and even to add a special comment to a child's work, a comment which would enrich their relationship.

Oral Communication. Jan introduced each theme by letting children express their feelings and experiences on the topic. During the school year, children had more and more opportunities to work in small groups. She considered that she had to promote children's interaction in class.

She believed that it was by talking that we learn a new language. "Puis y'a surtout le fait que je veux les faire parler français pour apprendre la langue. S'y parlent pas, si j'les donne pas la permission de parler ben, y vont pas apprendre." Jan put emphasis on certain aspects of the oral language. They worked systematically on incorrect sentence structures or expressions. Jan deplored the fact that the prescribed material did not integrate activities to develop proper language structures.

Reading. Reading was part of daily life. Sometimes it was a text from the prescribed material and related to the theme. But most of the time it was a few sentences from their textbook, or sentences written by children, and related to the activities themselves. Sometimes, Jan presented a text in order to study a specific grammar rule, They would read the story, discuss it, and then look for patterns in words.

In mid-November, Jan's class was involved in a reading week project. Children had the opportunity to meet authors and to listen to guest speakers talking about their favorite books. They also had a 15-minute reading period (USSR) every day. Jan saw in this school event an occasion to promote reading in her class. She planned a 15-minute silent reading period every day for the rest of the school year. "Ca leur donne une chance de lire. A la maison, ils s'assoient très rarement avec un livre." Jan added that she tried to be a good model. She read in front of the children as often as possible.

Writing. Writing followed the same pattern as reading. Written work originated from activities suggested in the prescribed material. The main objective was to have children communicate their own experience

and feelings through words. They shared their work and talked about it. During the second half of the school year, children were involved in a special project with grade four students from another school. Jan used this opportunity to encourage children to write.

Jan said that she did not have difficulties with spelling during her schooling. She did not know what to do to help those who were having problems in this area. She did not plan systematic drills to overcome their problems. She mentioned that her teacher's guide provided her with some strategies to develop spelling. She selected words with which children encountered difficulties in their writing.

Jan developed grammar skills through reading. After having discussed the content, children were asked to look for patterns and deduce general rules. The prescribed material proposed an activity to enhance learning. Later during the school year, she introduced spelling and grammar skills through the letter exchange project rather than through activities especially designed for that purpose.

In Jan's class, all written work was not completely corrected, only that published outside the class. Otherwise children were merely asked to pay attention when writing to what they had studies in class. Corrections were done collectively. Children could ask for assistance from their classmates or from the teacher. Jan tried to correct written work with the authors themselves. "J'essaie de corriger avec eux au lieu de moi apporter les compositions à la maison. Ca, ça sert à rien vraiment."

Jan mentioned that children learned a lot through collective correction. "Je trouve qu'ils peuvent voir les erreurs des autres beaucoup plus facilement que les leurs. Je pense que ça leur aide à

prendre connaissance... un enseigne à l'autre." She added that they seemed to become less discouraged with their work when corrections were done with a classmate.

Jan found it difficult to integrate various subjects. As it was her first year teaching in grade four she did not have the necessary knowledge about the curriculum to integrate language arts with the other subjects. "C'est toujours comme ça la première année quand on enseigne quelque chose de nouveau. Comme tu sais je n'ai pas le temps de passer des heures de temps à fouiller à gauche et à droite." However, she did try to integrate health when the prescribed material offered this opportunity.

In the course of the school year, the letter exchange project with the other grade four class allowed her to integrate French language arts with science.

Activities in Lucie's Class

Lucie used a variety of material in her class. At the beginning of the school year she developed activities from the children's textbook and the workbook. Later during the year she exchanged the precribed material for children's literature. Songs played an important role in her teaching.

Oral Communication. Children had many opportunities to express themselves orally in her class. Each time she introduced a song or a poem, they listened to it and then expressed ideas, feelings, and emotions about it. They also worked on various projects and presented them to their classmates, or other classes. They participated in a children's theatre festival at the Faculté Saint-Jean.

Lucie believed that it was necessary to correct children's oral language. She tried to do it without children really being conscious of it; by echoing their utterances. "Tu deviens le modèle à ce moment-là." Lucie and her students had discussed the fact that they should help each other learn to speak French.

Reading. In early October, reading activities were centered around a play. Children were working on the text in order to become familiarized with it. They read the play section by section, answering questions, looking for specific vocabulary words such as synonyms, antonyms, etc. During the following months, they memorized the scenario and presented it to other children. From early November to the end of school year, reading activities were mostly done through children's literature, songs and poems. They used these reading activities as the starting point for various projects.

Lucie encouraged her students to read on their own. She organized a project in which children received a sticker for each book read. The purpose was to have children read as many books as possible and to select one to be presented to the whole class. Children had also held a "book fair" as a fund raising project. They used the money to buy books for their reading center. They also contributed to their collection by bringing their own books.

Lucie also enjoyed reading to children. Many activities originated from these readings. Children acted out some of the roles, mimed, rewrote parts of the scenario, made up their own version of the story, and so on.

Writing. The development of language skills were all interconnected. In the course of the school year, writing activities became more and more related to reading, or listening activities. They developed projects in religion, in health, as well as in science.

Grammar and spelling were learned through collaborative writing. Sometimes, children were asked to write a story in which they had to include a list of words or verbs. In the course of the year they also participated in the extension of the class album. Lucie used these opportunities to introduce basic writing skills such as how to select, organize, and formulate information. She used dictation with sentences prepared by children. They had to formulate sentences using specific verbs. She preferred to introduce verbs through sentences rather than through conjugation.

Lucie strongly believed that all written work was supposed to be error-free. She encouraged children to use dictionaries, and charts posted in class, or to see their classmates for some help. Then she worked with each child to correct sentence structure. She wanted to make sure that all work was, if not perfect, at least acceptable according to French language norms.

Summary

The two immersion teachers' daily actions in their classes seemed to be based on what they thought would be best for the child's development. They endeavored to create an environment that fostered second language learning. When compared to Genesee's (1985) description of the immersion setting, we can say that these teachers tried to reproduce an environment similar to the first language acquisition one:

children learned the new language by being involved in activities in which they had to use the language to negotiate meaning. Themes developed by teachers were centered around the children's lives, and what was important for them in order to better understand themselves and the world surrounding them.

However, spelling and grammar were sometimes studied in a limited context. These learnings were not always relevant to real classroom situation; some activities were especially designed for this purpose.

Children could count on the contextual support created by activities developed within themes to increase their language competency. However, these two teachers did not consciously planned activities for which children needed a range of cognitive involvement to perform the task. It did happened that children had to analyze, synthesize, or evaluate the information to perform the task. However, these two teachers did not deliberately take this concept of language development into account when selecting and planning activities.

The two teachers' schooling and their previous teaching experiences helped them to design interesting and meaningful activities for children and themselves. Topics selected were relevant to children's own experiences. According to Genesee (1985) these characteristics are essential to language learning.

The two teachers attempted to present activities in which the language skills were interrelated. Their planning based on themes allowed them to simultaneously develop oral communication, reading, and writing skills. Their willingness and ability to integrate French language arts to other curricular subjects were indicative of their perception of language learning. They wanted to provide children with

the necessary language skills to actively participate in any classroom discussion and project, on any topic from daily life.

Researchers have demonstrated that in order to foster language acquisition, classroom interaction should be oriented toward the child. Cummins (1987), Swain and Lapkin (1986) explained immersion students' weaknesses in speaking and writing by the fact that they were confined to a receptive role. These two teachers were aware of the fact that it is by talking that one learns to talk. They encouraged classroom discussions, and small group work in order to provide children with as many opportunities to talk. However, it often happened that, during classroom discussions, the child's message was directed more to the teacher than to the class.

Factors that Influenced Teachers' Choices and Planning

According to their professional requirements, teachers should base their teaching on the provincial program of studies. The school administration must provide teachers with the curriculum guide appropriate to their grade level. The learning resources such as textbooks, workbooks, and teachers' guides are considered as tools to help teachers to fulfill their mandate. Teachers should also evaluate children's progress on a regular basis.

In Alberta, when this study was conducted, there was no program of studies designed solely for the immersion program. It was also common for a school board to evaluate children with the "Test du Manitoba", a summative test developed in Manitoba for the francophone population, since there was none designed by the provincial authorities.

The purpose of this section is to examine how the two teachers reacted to the instructional situation; how they dealt with a program in use, what material they used in order to cover the program, and how they evaluated students.

Jan's Interpretations of the Program of Studies and Teaching Material

During an interview, Jan stated that she did not have the French language arts program of studies. She considered the learning resources as the basis element for the grade four program. She trusted those who proposed this new learning material at this level. She had one objective: to present all themes in the textbook in order to cover the grade four program. According to her, the learning material respected the children's development. It was related to the children's interests.

Jan tried to adjust the activities presented in the teacher's guide for her students. She often made minor modifications in order to make activities closer to the children's interests at the present time. For example, once she noticed that it was not necessary to follow directions step-by-step to complete a project. She skipped some of them in order to keep children interested. On another occasion she realized that her students could not come up with a clear understanding of the topic suggested in her teaching guide. She changed it for the benefit of everybody.

The same situation happened when she was using the workbook. The activities were organized in mini-themes and were aimed at developing one grammatical aspect of the language. She selected them according to the children's needs in this area. She began with the easiest and the

ones used most often: the plural form and gender. She often had to take more time than what was suggested in her guide as she noticed that the children did not have the oral competency needed for writing.

Jan's Class Evaluation Process

In Jan's class, evaluation was an ongoing process. "J'peux dire que j'évalue toujours à l'oral, ce qu'ils me disent, et à l'écrit. Certainement que j'ai des petits quizzes et des examens, mais ça prend pas toute leur note ça." She did have planned activities to evaluate children's progress. According to her, the daily work in class did not provide her with all the information she needed as they often worked in groups. "Rendu à un examen où ils sont tout seuls, c'est plus la même histoire." These exams allowed her to plan her next teaching strategies.

Lucie's Interpretations of the Program of Studies

Lucie considered the program of studies as the central part of her teaching. It was her first year teaching in grade four. Therefore, the French language arts curriculum guide was important for her in order to select the knowledge appropriate for her students. After two months teaching, she decided to make a chart with all the objectives at her grade level and to post it in class. "Je veux ça directement dans face." This helped her to better understand the objectives and to plan her teaching. "Si je sais par exemple, en verbes, s'il faut qu'ils aient une certaine maîtrise de tel ou tel niveau de verbes, ben, j'sais, c'est dans ma tête. Alors, c'est certain quand quelque chose se produit ben, j'peux donner la direction vers ce pas-là." She added that this chart helped her to feel more secure as she did not always

use the prescribed material.

Lucie's Interpretations of Teaching Material

At the beginning of the school year Lucie was using workbook. She said that it had some interesting characteristics. "Quand t'as un cahier d'exercices tu peux maintenir tout le monde au même niveau (...) C'est plus sécurisant." However, she noticed that it was difficult to evaluate the children's strengths and weaknesses as they all ended up with the same product. She preferred to involve children in a reading-writing project even if it was more demanding on her. She believed that it was more valuable for all individuals involved. "J'suis certaine qu'y vont apprendre cinquante fois ce qu'ils auraient appris à l'intérieur d'un cahier d'exercices."

Spelling and grammatical concept were studies through sentences made up by the children. Lucie mentioned that she was against dictation when the main purpose was to study words. "Moi, des dictées étudiées, juste étudiées, je suis contre ça. Ca n'évalue pas un élève. En tout cas je suis la seule à avoir cette opinion-là, mais j'la garde." Surprisingly enough, Lucie had one "official dictation" per week. The difference between her dictation and those of her colleagues was that in her case the sentences came from the children's work. "Y a des parties comme là je fais les verbes. Comme cette semaine, ils avaient une révision: avoir et être à l'imparfait. Mais ils apprennent juste à l'écrire (...) Je veux dire, j'leur fais pas écrire j'étais, tu étais, il était, etc. Je fais pas de conjugaisons."

Lucie's Class Evaluation Process

The "official dictation," when related to what was prescribed in

the program of studies, was marked. But all the others, involving games and collective writing were not. "C'est une forme de révision de vocabulaire. Très souvent j'vais dire: 'Prenez une feuille' pis bang! on s'lance. C'est jamais officiel."

Other than the dictation, Lucie rarely formaly tested the children to evaluate their progress. When it was the case her main objective was to make children proud of their own progress. She thought that the activities based on a reading-writing project gave her better information on where the children stood with regard to the objectives. "T'as vraiment le sens où est rendu ton élève. C'est la meilleure évaluation que tu peux avoir." Lucie had organized a file system in which she included each child's work. "Comme là j'vais tout leur faire un dossier individuel pour savoir ce que j'ai couvert (...) J'veux être certaine qu'ils ont couvert ce qu'ils ont à couvrir en 4e année." During the course of the year she gathered information on the children and compiled their written works to evaluate their progress.

Lucie had a strong opinion regarding the standardized tests requested by her school board. She said that it was not fair for children who were not used to this kind of testing. "Moi, j'ai passé des questionnaires. Les élèves sont pas capables de répondre à trois questions comme ça, s'y ont pas vécu l'texte. Vois-tu l'danger? Moi je leur apprend à vivre, à sentir un texte. O.K. Tu sais j'te l'ai dit c'est mon objectif: si tu danses y faut que tout ton corps danse, si tu chantes y faut que tout ton âme danse... e... chante, etc.' Tu sais. Si tu arrives avec un examen; c'est froid un examen. Là tu lis un texte, pis là on t'pose des questions. J'te jure qu'y vont pas voir trois pieds d'vant eux autres." At one moment Lucie thought that she

might have to prepare tests similar to the "Test du Manitoba". "Il faudrait que je leur donne des tests comme ça pour leur rendre justice un moment donné, un mois avant le test du Manitoba." However, she was not totally decided. She was still questioning the purposes of giving such a test. "Qu'est-ce que ça mesure?"

The Influence of Parents on Teaching

When thinking about school, what comes to mind is a class full of children seated at desks, and a teacher, with white chalk in her hand, writing in the blackboard. There are more than two actors involved in the situation. Even if they are not physically part of the activities, parents, school administrators, and colleagues are also members of this social situation.

Parents play an active role in the education of their children. However, they count on the school to complement what they cannot provide. Teachers should ensure that they will provide the best instruction. But above all, they must create an environment in which children will grow in harmony with themselves, their classmates, and the world surrounding them. In order to obtain the best for their children, parents will often communicate with teachers, making special requests, and even putting pressure on them. The parents' influence will lead teachers to react to their demand.

Jan's Interpretations of Parental Expectations. Jan seemed to have ambivalent feelings toward parents. She valued the family concept. She liked to involve children in a discussion about their family. She enjoyed meeting parents, to chat with them. "J'aime rencontrer les gens. Puis y a des parents ça fait quatre ou cinq ans que j'ai

enseigné à leurs enfants, puis on est toujours..., pas des grands amis, mais des amis. Puis on s'arrête à Willow Place, puis on discute de n'importe quoi."

However, in formal interviews, Jan felt that parents put a lot of pressure on teachers' shoulders. "Puis je trouve de plus en plus que les parents s'attendent beaucoup des professeurs. Ils s'attendent que... qu'on règle les problèmes des enfants là." She found that there were discrepancies between school and home messages especially with regard to social behavior. "Puis moi j'dis une chose à l'école: 'que si quelqu'un te frappe on n'a pas le droit de le frapper.' Y s'en va à la maison puis leur père dit: 'Si quelqu'un te frappe, frappe-le deux fois plus fort.' Alors qu'est-ce qu'on fait? C'est frustrant. Y a pas de continuité entre la maison et l'école." She added that parents send their family-related problems to school and expect teachers to solve them without their active support.

The promotion of respect, fairness and understanding of others through activities, allowed Jan to fulfill her own beliefs and the parents' expectations with regard to human relationships.

Jan was aware that her philosophy about spelling might puzzle some parents, particularly francophone ones. She corrected only what the children were supposed to know as was previously seen in class. "J'corrige jamais toutes les fautes. Surtout les choses comme... qu'ils sont supposées de savoir. Comme ça il me semble que c'est important." She did not report any parental comments on it.

However, Jan said she did not feel at ease to read books to children since she received phone calls from parents questioning her choices. "Depuis ce temps-là, j'ai un peu peur de lire des livres."

She did not know what books to read in order to respect the parents way of educating their children.

Lucie's Interpretations of Parental Expectations. Lucie tried to develop a good relationship with the parents. She had met most of them during the previous school year since she had taught their children from grade three. Toward the end of the school year she had invited her students and the parents to decide whether or not they wanted her to teach then for a second year. Most of the children were in her class because they had expressed a willingness to remain.

At the beginning of the school year, Lucie mentioned that she received phone calls only from new parents inquiring about what was going on in her class. She also received phone calls from parents requesting her help to solve problems to school life, but involving children in her class. She used poems and songs to have children discuss their problems.

Lucie always tried to keep in touch with parents in order to know how to deal with children's problems.

During the first term, Lucie tried to involve parents in the "homework affair." They were asked to listen to their child while practicing reading a text aloud before presenting it to the class, and to help them with spelling words. At the first parent-teacher interview, some parents mentioned that it was difficult for them to enjoy being with their child. They said that homework created a stress that affected their relationship. A few days later, while children were talking about Christmas and Santa Claus, Lucie got an idea. She proposed it to them and the project took form as they were discussing

it. She proposed an interview with their parents and their grandparents on what Christmas meant for them when they were eight or nine years old. This activity allowed her to reach her main objective, that of pleasantly involving parents in their child's school work, and to meet those objectives prescribed in the program as the children had to write a report on their inquiry.

The Influence of School Administrators on Teaching

All teachers must meet school administrators' expectations. Thus, the teachers are required to conform with Alberta Education curricula, to implement new programs, to meet children's needs, to communicate with parents, etc. On the other hand, the school board should provide teachers with resource people and materials to assist them in their tasks.

Jan's Interpretations of School Administrators' Expectations. According to Jan, some parents' expectations of teachers come from school board decisions. School administrators' expect more than what they did previously. They introduce new programs that add pressure on teachers. "Ils envoient de belles lettres à la maison disant qu'on va enrichir chaque enfant où il a besoin d'enrichissement et tout le reste. Et naturellement les parents s'attendent à ça et ils ont le droit de s'attendre à ça. Moi, si je recevais une lettre me disant que mon Jimmy a fait "above average", j'aimerais savoir ce que le professeur fait pour l'enrichir." Jan thought that the Gifted Program was a great idea. However, she could not implement it on as regular a basis as it should be. "Parce que j'ai vraiment de gros problèmes à décider qui a le plus besoin: l'enfant qui a des problèmes ou l'enfant qui a

juste ... ben pas juste, mais qui a besoin de l'enrichissement? Parce qu'on a les deux dans la classe." She stated that she had neither the time nor the energy to satisfy all her students' needs. "On n'a pas le temps et moi je n'ai pas l'énergie d'aider tout le monde. La commission scolaire s'attend à des miracles ou presque."

Jan was conscious that she had to organize special activities to answer talented children's needs. There was already a pull-out program for gifted students at her school but it was not enough. They needed a full-time enrichment program. "J'me sens coupable que j'peux pas fournir. (...) Surtout avec un enfant comme Jesse dans ma classe, pas juste Jesse. Y'en a pas mal qui sont pas mal intelligents. Il faut faire quelque chose ... Autrement tu vas les perdre." Jan added that some children did not cause any behavioral problems because they were quiet and were interested in many areas. However, it was not the case for everybody. "John, mais si y'est pas intéressé, (...) si c'est quelque chose de tannant qu'il n'aime pas, bien y'est vraiment un problème. Ben, tu devrais le voir en science. Y'a jamais un manque d'intérêt."

To compensate for this difficulty, Jan adjusted her own expectations for each child when planning a class activity. "Par exemple, en français, j'm'attends pas la même chose de Kerry par exemple que j'm'attends de ... Laurie." These adjustments applied mostly to the level of involvement in an activity.

During the course of the year, Jan realized that children were more willing to achieve a higher quality of work when the activities were meaningful to them. "Je trouve Jacinthe que ce qu'il faut qu'ils écrivent soit 'meaningful', le mot en français là ... parce que si ça

ne leur dit rien ils ne vont pas essayer." For example, her students wrote letters to pen pals in another immersion school. She also involved her students in a speech contest, requiring them to work to the best of their ability. "C'est pour ça vraiment le concours oratoire. J'pense que c'est une expérience vraiment fantastique. Y essaient, tu as aucune idée. Y'en a là qui n'ont rien produit de l'année et pis là, tout à coup, trois paragraphes. Pour eux ça, ça c'est très bon." According to Jan, this activity was of great interest because children could choose their own topic.

During the course of the activity, Jan suggested recording the speeches and sending them to their pen pals to give each child a sense of purpose for this activity.

Due to the success of this experience, Jan continued to present child-directed projects in other areas while integrating the French language arts program. For example, after having discussed the stars and constellations in science, she noticed that most of the children were interested in knowing more. They listed a series of questions to develop the topic. They chose the one of greatest interest for them and made up their own project. She did not expect the same involvement from everyone.

She created even more interest in the project when it was decided to publish the children's work for other classmates or for their pen pals, to see. Every child participated actively in it.

In an attempt to answer school board demands, Jan found out that the key words for planning were: offering courses through open-ended activities and developing meaningful and purposeful activities. During the last interview in May, she talked about two more projects

that she was planning using the same approach.

Lucie's Interpretations of School Administrators' Expectations. Lucie's contact with her school board administration was difficult. During the previous year, Lucie felt the pressure caused by the standardized tests in French language arts. "Tu vois le système nous dit: 'Ne restez pas collés à ces méthodes-là, ne restez pas collés à ce curriculum-là.' Mais on a aucun outil pour s'en détacher. On a absolument rien. En plus, le système nous bourre avec ces tests-là à la fin." She felt at odds with what was said by the school board administration, and what was actually being done. She stated that the year before this research project, she used the workbook in order to satisfy the school board administration's expectations. She did not know yet how she would react to it this year.

However, after two months teaching with her grade four group, and thoughtful discussions with colleagues and children, she could no longer justify the use of the prescribed material. She discussed this matter with a consultant from Alberta Education who informed her that they were thinking of not using this teaching material in the near future. She asked her school administration if it was possible to leave the books aside and to plan activities from other resource material. The school administrator was supportive of Lucie's initiative by letting her organize her teching as she thought best for her group and herself.

From that day, Lucie did not utilize the basic material anymore. She used children's literature, songs, poems. Children wrote their own stories and conducted interviews. She integrated French with other

subjects such as science, health, and religion.

The Influence of Colleagues

However, there are tacit rules to be respected within a staff. For example, it will be more common to see teachers helping rather than criticizing each other.

Jan's Interpretations of her Colleagues. Jan seemed to have developed a good relationship with her colleagues. She was often seen talking with them in the staff room, in the hallways. She usually participated in the school projects by acting as secretary during monthly meetings, by playing an active role during cultural events, etc.

Jan was influenced by some of her colleagues. During an interview she mentioned that it was important for her to cover the grade four program. She did not want higher grade teachers complaining about the fact their students had not learned anything during the previous year. "Tu sais, on rentre dans la salle des professeurs, pis on entend les professeurs de ceux plus âgés que nous ... se plaindre que ... ils sont venus en X année puis ils ne savent même pas ça. Couvrir le programme là, on s'attend à quelque chose d'appris l'année d'après."

In order to stop these complaints, Jan had decided to cover all themes presented in her material. She reported that Bernice, a classmate from university who was teaching the same grade level, told her that it was possible to do so as she did it during the previous year. "Je sais que c'est ma première année et tout. Je m'attends à couvrir tous les thèmes dans ce texte-là. (...) Mon amie l'a déjà fait alors ... Elle dit que c'est possible de le faire et que c'est important de le faire."

The pressure from colleagues was also represented in Jan's comments about spelling. She corrected only what children were supposed to know as previously seen in class. However, she wanted to make sure that there were no mistakes on children's works if they were posted in the hallway. "Je l'sais pas. On devrait pas avoir des doubles standards comme ça mais ... C'est la pression des autres. Si y'a une affiche qui rapporte que les miens ont fait ... qui est pleine de fautes, j'peux m'attendre que quelques personnes vont passer par ma porte puis dire..."

The pressure of correct spelling came back when Jan talked about the first project her class sent to their pen pals. "J'ai envoyé le journal à Mayflower School. Puis vraiment, j'voulais pas vraiment l'envoyer parce que j'savais qu'il avait des fautes dedans. Mais j'ai expliqué à Bernice comment on s'est pris." When the children wrote their first letter to their pen pal she told them they should correct their work more thoroughly because the other teacher did. On this occasion, Jan changed her way of correcting the children's writing. They were used to correcting all together and to paying attention only to what they had seen in class. This time, Jan brought their letters home to correct them thoroughly.

During the Teachers' Convention, Jan and Bernice spent some time together. They talked about their classes and what they were doing. They decided to organize a letter exchange project between the two groups. They set up the basis of this initiative. For Jan this project grew in importance as the weeks passed by. It became the highlight of her school year, the source of many activities which would not have happened without it. The project started up with the trading

of a class journal as proposed in the learning material. From there, children exchanged letters, then they developed classroom projects that included a videotape of their oral presentation, a story with various activities for their newly made friends' listening center, to the planning of a field trip where they were to see each other for the first time, and many activities.

Jan used each of these activities to increase the children's abilities to read, write and communicate orally. She used stories to introduce grammatical knowledge, and writing projects to have them apply what they had learned in a meaningful context.

Lucie's Interpretations of her Colleagues. At the end of October, Lucie met Suzanne, the student-teacher who was supposed to come in her class in November. They talked about her students, her way of working with her students, etc. Lucie reported that Suzanne's questioning had made her reflect on what she was doing in class. "J'ai discuté avec elle une heure de temps puis ... e ... elle m'a dit: 'Comment se fait-il que tu puisses ... que tu restes avec des outils comme ça, obligatoires?' J'arrive chez moi, et puis j'me suis dit: 'Pourquoi est-ce que j'le ferais pas?'" By coincidence, the same day, the students asked why they were not working on project similar to the one they had done the previous year. "Puis les élèves m'ont dit: 'Madame, pourquoi est-ce qu'on n'a pas de gros livres comme l'année dernière?' Jusqu'à maintenant j'avais toujours une bonne excuse." Lucie used these two events to reflect on her teaching method. She asked herself why she had to hide behind workbooks. "Je me suis dit: 'Mais qu'est-ce qui fait que tu te sentes obligée de continuer en te

protégeant comme ça?'"

However, Lucie found that her decision was not the easiest one. She said that some days she felt she could handle it, but some others it looked like a "mountain of work." She constantly questioned herself about her teaching. "Là, j'me parle puis je me pose des questions. C'est comme si je réfléchissais fort ... Des fois j'ai l'air sûre de mon coup, ... pas sûre ... sûre."

When Lucie decided not to use the prescribed material, she knew that it might sound inappropriate to other teachers. She recalled a situation that happened a few years before. Some of her colleagues were concerned about the way she was teaching. She used her experience gained when teaching French as a second language to adults to develop activities based on children's needs and interests. "En tout cas, ça inquiétait les gens, puis y'a un professeur qui est venu m'voir, puis elle a dit: 'Ecoute, j'suis vraiment inquiète pour toi. J'sais pas si j'devrais te l'dire, mais t'as vraiment pas l'air organisée.'" Another teacher even told her she was not teaching since she was not using "the method" seen at that time as the only means of teaching French language arts in an immersion program.

Lucie was conscious that her teaching style did not apply to every teacher. She sometimes had difficulties with other teachers. She felt that they did not understand her. "Souvent quand tu essaies d'expliquer les choses aux gens, ils pensent que tu parles pour leur personnalité." In order to overcome this misunderstanding, Lucie invited her colleagues to come to her class. She presented how she was working with her students and why. She was likewise open to observing their methods. The objectives of these meetings was to get a better

knowledge of each other's teaching methods in order to create a constructive relationship within the school.

Considering Lucie's relationship with her colleagues at school, one can say that they had not directly influenced the activities in her class. However, they might have caused her to become more conscious about her teaching method.

Lucie's position on spelling was that all written works should be error-free even if the product was not published. As most of the children's written work was shared in some way in her class she did not want to expose children to defective products. Sometimes children's works were posted in class. On other occasions they were presented orally. Even then, she did not want children to catch faulty sentence structures. "Les enfants viennent relire leur chose après. (...) Pis là quand ils lisent tout çà, çà s'imprime hen! Alors donc je dois avouer que j'suis maniaque dans c'sens-là. Je ne peux pas supporter qu'ils enregistrent des erreurs." This concern resulted from her own experience of extra lessons in spelling and writing she had had at the elementary level.

Lucie discussed this matter with her student-teacher, feeling she might be the only one to put so much emphasis on spelling. "Elle connaissait l'importance de çà, elle avait le potentiel d'les corriger, mais elle corrigeait en général, comprends-tu? (...) Pis c'est là que je me suis posée des questions."

Lucie realized that her phobia for spelling errors might affect the children. She was struggling with the idea that some of them might be stifled in their creativity, in their willingness to produce error-free writings. She hoped to receive help in this area. "Je

pense qu'une personne qui ... c'est peut-être toi, en tant que personne de l'extérieur qui pourrait vraiment noter si les enfants souffrent de cette façon de faire."

From January to June, Lucie got involved in a research project on reading with Emilie, a university professor. This professor came to her class especially when children were engaged in reading activities. This new project gave Lucie an opportunity to discuss various aspects of teaching with Emilie. She mentioned her concern about spelling. They discussed it, and she came to the conclusion that she should be more selective when choosing texts to be corrected thoroughly. Following the discussion, the children were involved in a writing activity. When asked if children would have to proceed to the final editing, Lucie said that it was not her intent, since they were not to be displayed or shared orally. "C'est moi qui va garder ce travail, comprends-tu? Si c'était dans leurs mains ... je le corrigerais."

Through further discussion with Emilie, Lucie came to accept that children will make some mistakes. She decided to not correct their written work thoroughly when it was communicated orally. According to her she preferred instead putting the emphasis on the communicative aspect of the language than on the linguistic one. "J'avais à choisir la communication avant la perfection. (...) J'ai appris à faire la part des choses."

Other Factors That Influence Teaching

In the course of daily life, there are many factors that affect teaching. The time factor seems to play an important role for certain teachers. For others it will be their tolerance to the noise level

that will influence the way they will organize daily activities. Jan and Lucie were both influenced by these elements.

Jan's Interpretations of Time Factor. Jan seemed to always have time to listen to the children, and to let them participate in class organization. She involved them in decisions regarding the setting for some activities by planning brainstorming sessions. She let them intervene in activities when they had discovered something important for themselves or when they had prepared on their own initiative an activity related to the theme. It was common to see children taking turns to introduce their own point of view.

Jan began to modify her schedule when the children got involved in the letter exchange project. Before that, activities went smoothly since only her class was involved. But for the benefit of the project, it was important that letters be ready on time in order to sustain interest. The first experience lead her to modify the daily routine, counting more and more on the children's ability to help each other and to be responsible for their own work. An example of this occurred during the preparation for the speech contest which was videotaped and sent to their pen pals. Jan proceeded as usual until she noticed it would be impossible for her to help each child edit his text plus correct the oral presentation. She first brought the texts home to correct them and then worked at school with those who needed more help. The others were invited to work two by two. She told them that one child would be the observer to pay attention to specific elements of the oral presentation, to comment on their peer's work, and then to exchange roles.

For Jan it was one of the rare occasions when she brought home children's written products to be corrected. Usually, corrections were done in class with children helping each other and the teacher working with the individual. According to her, it did not help the child if she corrected his work at home. She saw instead the benefit of correcting written work in small groups. "J'pense que ça leur aide à prendre connaissance: 'Oh! vraiment. C'est supposé d'être écrit comme ça? (...) Un enseigne à l'autre. (...) Ce n'est pas une perte de temps, c'est important."

Jan could feel the time pressure, especially when she was thinking of children with special needs. Her school board wanted teachers to implement enrichment programs in their classes, and to plan activities aimed at developing higher thinking skills according to Bloom's taxonomy. It seemed easier for Jan to help those who had difficulties. "Moi, j'essaie de toujours faire de différentes choses, pas toujours pour les plus faibles. Tu sais avoir de la variété. Ca nous rend plus conscient de ce qu'on devrait faire et qu'on devrait essayer d'avoir différentes activités que juste "recall". Mais si on peut avoir le temps. C'est le temps qui nous manque; pas dans la classe mais hors de la classe." She needed more time to plan activities, and to look through different resource materials. She felt guilty because she could not meet all of her students' needs.

Lucie's Interpretations of the Time Factor

For Lucie, the time factor seemed to intervene only when there were too many unexpected events within the same week. On these occasions, she found it difficult to decide which activities to choose.

In her class, the activities went on at a steady pace; one activity following the other without waste of time. It was for that reason that she wanted to alternate activities involving a lot of energy and emotions with those requiring more quiet concentration. "En général j'essaie d'avoir tant de périodes de silence par jour pour qu'on puisse récupérer."

Lucie found that some activities justified spending more class time. According to her, it was worthwhile to let children use drawings to express their feelings. She metnioned that with the help of her husband, a former artist, she used children's drawings to analyze their personality and to detect their problems.

Jan's Interpretations of the Noise Factor. In Jan's case, it was more the connotation attached to the word noise itself that bothered her at the beginning of her teaching: noisy classes meant that teachers could not control their students. It also meant a lack of structure. However, her perception changed during her first year of teaching when she noticed that the school administration did not pay too much attention to it when evaluating their new teachers. "Mais après ça, j'ai réalisé que ce n'était pas le niveau de bruit qui est important vraiment pour dire si tu as le contrôle de ta classe ou non. Ca n'a rien à faire avec ça."

Jan was much more concerned about the effect that noise had on some children. She reported that two of them in particular needed a quiet atmosphere to work. She tried to organize activities that satisfied everyone. Most of the time children worked individually, and as the activity progressed they could visit their classmates to

exchange ideas, or to get some help. On some occasions she has to remind them to lessen the noise.

Lucie's Interpretations of the Noise Factor. Lucie's concern about the noise was mainly directed toward other teachers' reactions. She reported that during the previous year some of them came to tell her that their students were in exams and that they would appreciate if she could lower the noise level for this occasion. Lucie stated that she always kept this factor in mind when organizing activities in class. She was aware that activities such as singing, dancing, and dramatizing might raise the noise level to an unacceptable level for others. She sometimes had to remind the children that singing was not yelling, or to stop an activity momentarily when they were becoming too excited. For example, when dramatizing a reading, she had to make them mime the situation instead, as she feared she might be disturbing other classes.

Though Lucie's class was often involved in activities that caused loudness, she also managed to have calmer periods during the day. She did not hesitate to put on some classical music while working, or to use quiet songs to ensure the transition between activities.

Summary

From the data, it appears that the two teachers' decisions and actions in teaching French as a second language in an immersion setting were influenced by a variety of internal and external factors.

1. Their schooling seems to have had an effect on their perception of language learning. The two teachers were not inclined to reproduce what they had experienced.
2. These two teachers' teaching seemed to be more influenced by the

parents' concerns with their children's social problems than by their concerns with their children's learning problems.

3. It appeared that the school boards' expectations have an effect that goes beyond what they anticipate. In both cases, they led teachers to move toward an approach more centered on the child.
4. Because the teaching material recommended does not always meet the needs of the child, it appeared that it led teachers to choose other material and class projects to meet these needs.
5. The lack of adequate resource material for immersion students seemed to limit the teachers in their choice of activities.
6. Colleagues were important members of the teachers' social world. By their criticisms, or their willingness to talk about their concerns and special projects, they helped each other to improve their teaching strategies.
7. The time factor seemed to affect one of the teachers in the implementation of new programs.
9. The noise factor did not influence teachers in the choice of activities.
10. Finally, the child was the ultimate factor which was taken into account when these teachers selected and planned their activities. These two teachers took other factors into consideration, but always referred back to the child when making the final decision in the choice and the planning of the activities.

Changes in the Pedagogical Approach

As expressed by researchers, teachers are seen as the key people

in the effectiveness of an immersion program. According to Cummins (1987), in an immersion situation teachers should provide a lot of opportunities for students to express themselves. The traditional pattern of classroom interaction characterized by a high proportion of teacher-led lessons should yield to situations in which children can participate actively in the planning and conducting of the activities.

In an immersion situation it was common to see teachers consider their teaching material as central to their teaching. In fact, the learning resources, by presenting a specific method to develop language skills, had replaced the program of studies.

Jan's Teaching Strategies

During an interview, Jan mentioned that she did not have the program of study for French language arts. She based her French lessons on what the prescribed material had to offer that might interest her students. She chose themes among those which allowed children to talk about themselves, the important people in their lives, their most precious belongings, etc. She developed themes basically on what was proposed in the material, making minor modifications to arouse children's interest. For example, after having done the activities as proposed in the teacher's guide, Jan suggested to her students a complementary activity that was used to raise their interest. Afterward she continued on as suggested in the learning resources.

On another occasion she noticed that children encountered difficulties in proceeding as proposed in the prescribed material. They were supposed to write a journal on the major events of the previous year. They had difficulties recalling one event in each of the

categories suggested. Jan proposed that they make their own. The informative aspect of the activity was transferred into one of imaginative to accommodate the children.

From March to the end of school, Jan relied less on the prescribed material. She attributed this change partly to the fact that her younger boy was recovering from health problems he had had since he was born, and, partly to the meeting she had in February with her friend when they planned the letter exchange project. Jan was encouraged by the children's reaction to this project. They participated actively in the elaboration of activities to be shared with their pen pals.

Gradually, Jan relied more on the children to select activities and less on her teaching materials. She counted on the children to develop the content and to organize classroom projects.

Classroom Interaction in Jan's Class

The pattern of classroom interaction also changed during the course of the year, In the early phase of the research project, the pattern of discussion could be associated to the one observed in a restricted language environment:

teacher elicits -- student responds -- teacher comments

There were only two actors in each situation and the teacher was always one of them. For example, when they were involved in an activity coming from the prescribed material the conversation was similar to this one:

T. - John, qu'est-ce que tu as apporté avec toi?

Ch. - Mon lego.

T. - Okay, et autres choses?

Ch. - Et mon bicyclette.

I. - Okay. Pourrais-tu nous dire pourquoi tu trouves que tes legos sont précieux?

Ch. - Je aime beaucoup.

I. - Pourquoi tu aimes tes legos?

Once all the children had their turn, they had a few moments to talk with each other in an informal situation.

Even during the show and tell, the teacher was the only one asking questions of the child presenting his photos.

I. - On va demander à Daniel de venir nous expliquer ce qu'il a mis au tableau. Et là, c'est absolument fantastique Daniel ce que tu as fait. Je suis très contente. (...)

Ch. - Ca, c'est mon premier gâteau de fête.

I. - Alors c'est ta première fête de tout. Si vous regardez plus tard les amis, vous allez voir c'est un grand, grand gâteau pour un petit bonhomme.

Ch. - Et ça c'est mon baptême.

I. - Ton baptême, quand tu était un petit bébé?

Ch. - Et j'ai la mon baptême dans Saint-Paul.

I. - Ah! A Saint-Paul? Est-ce que tu restais à Saint-Paul dans ce temps-là?

And so on, until there were no more photos left. It rarely happened that a student intervened in the conversation. On one occasion a child raised her hand to ask a question but she put it down after a short while. However, it was common to see children discussing with the speaker after the formal presentation.

In January, the characteristics of the discussion changed a

little. There were more opportunities for the children to interact in a formal situation. For example, after an activity involving the whole class, the children went on with their own reactions to what was said during the debate:

Ch. 1 - J'aime vivre ici, mais je pense que ceux qui vivent dans le nord font des choses interesting.

T. - Intéressant?

Ch.1 - Oui.

Ch.2 - Et dans le Grand Nord il y a pas d'électricité là!

T. - Tu penses pas qu'il y a de l'électricité là?

Ch.2 - Dans le Grand nord où les esquimaux vit.

Children - Oui.

T. - Ben, ça dépend. Y a des personnes qui ont l'électricité et y a d'autres, tu as raison, qui n'en ont pas.

Ch.3 - Y a des personnes qui ont des maisons.

T. - Oui.

Ch.4 - Y a des personnes qui ont de gros maisons.

In this case, the conversation was still directed toward the teacher. However, children were now engaged in a negotiation of meaning. They were trying to come up with a clearer vision of what the North Pole was.

The lesson ended with an informal discussion, in which the children talked to each other, and exchanged ideas and knowledge on the topic. However, the pattern changed gradually as the children got involved in the exchange of letters with the other grade four class. From March on, most of the activities were oriented toward this new audience. Children had more and more opportunities to work in small

groups as new projects developed.

Children's and Teacher's Roles

The exchange of letters also initiated a change with regard to the role played by individuals in the class. Children began to have more voice in the organization of the activities. Before this special project, they were asked to contribute to the organization of the class setting for a special activity, or to say what they thought about this and that. But almost everything had already been pre-planned by the teacher. Their participation was at the surface level. As they got more involved in the project, their role and the teacher's began to change. Children became gradually involved in activities in which they had to make suggestions, to make decisions with regard to individual or collective projects. For example, after having done a brainstorming session on what they would like to know about the star constellations, children became so interested in it that it turned out as a class project. Children chose questions from the list and developed their own project. Some did a report to be sent to their pen pal, and others presented their work to the class.

The usual teacher-centered activities became more oriented toward the children. During the last formal interview Jan mentioned that she wanted to involve her students in the organization of their field trip with their pen pals. She relied on students who had already been there to help in the planning of activities as they were the hosts. Children had already suggested activities for the visit. They became so interested in the project that they wrote letters on their own, built strategies in order to make sure they would recognize each other, and so on.

From her previous role as controller, Jan became an active listener. She became the one who suggested activities and who counted on the children to shape them. This project had repercussions not only on the organization of a series of activities but also on its significance. Jan found that, to be successful, an activity should not only be based on what is of interest to the children, it also had to be purposeful for them. Jan took this aspect in consideration even when developing spelling and grammar skills.

At the beginning of the school year, Jan taught grammar skills through activities based on a theme especially prepared to introduce one grammatical aspect of the language. Later during the school year, Jan used the reading projects, and the exchange of letters with their friends to work on spelling and grammar skills instead of using the prescribed text as before. She also invited children to correct each other's work. According to her, this practice was more meaningful to them; they got a better understanding of grammar rules, and they could apply them with more accuracy in their own writing.

The children's positive reaction to Jan's second approach in teaching French language arts was indicative of the change that happened during the school year. They did not perceive these new activities as French lessons for they were not working on purposeless worksheets and textbooks. They had a preconception of what French language arts was as they had always been introduced to French in this manner the previous years.

Lucie's Teaching Strategies

Lucie's teaching approach had also changed during the school year.

At the beginning, she did not know if it was possible to organize child-centered activities similar to the ones she had planned during the previous year. She feared that it might be boring for the children to do the same kind of activities for a second year in a row. This concern, plus the pressure caused by the administration's policies with regard to the use of prescribed material and standardized tests led her to plan activities based on the teaching material.

When Lucie decided to teach grade four she analyzed the textbook. She wanted to make an inventory of reading texts that she felt might be interesting to the children. Before beginning on this research project, however, she had already put the textbook aside, as it did not offer enough opportunities to develop meaningful activities. However, she kept the workbook. She then used a play, some songs and poems, and collective writings to plan French language arts lessons.

At the end of October, a combination of events made her rethink her teaching. First a child came to her and asked why they were not doing big books anymore, and why they were not working on science projects like the year before. Also when meeting her student teacher she was questioned on why she was still using the workbooks even if she did not believe in them. These two events made Lucie wonder about excuses she had accepted within herself, preventing her from developing the necessary activities she truly believed would best promote the French language arts program for the child.

Following this soul searching, Lucie discussed her intention with her students. She told them that there were many ways to learn and that they could rely on various materials to reach their objectives.

However, the first attempt proved to be superficial. Yes, the

children used books from the reading center rather than the textbooks, but activities were as limited as the ones found in her teaching material. The only real choice was the book to be read. Children did not have the choice to read the book as they wished; she requested them to read it twice before doing anything concerning the writing part of the project. She did not let them take notes while reading. Lucie proposed they make a big book with their written work. However, the big book was similar to any workbook: a story of about fifteen sentences; three questions related to it; an exercise based on synonyms and antonyms, and so on. When questioned on how this activity answered individual needs, she said that it provided a framework in which each child was free to work. They could make their own story, choose their own questions, etc.

A second attempt was the reading circle. Children were asked to select a book from the reading center or the library; to practice reading it before presenting it to the whole class; and to prepare a poster explaining the content, some new expressions to be worked on and learned, and new vocabulary words. This activity was to be the starting point for several others, none planned in advance, all inspired by the children's reaction to the reading.

This activity, however, did not offer many more opportunities to make choices and plans as a lot had been pre-determined by the teacher. During the oral reading, the teacher interrupted the reader several times, even asking him if he would allow her to read it for him, because the reading material chosen was not at his level. However, as Lucie had anticipated, this activity did lead to another one which offered more opportunities for the children. They had to conduct an

interview with their parents and grandparents. As it had to be done outside class time, children had to plan their own work: select questions for the interview, contact their parents and grandparents, gather the information, and report the result to classmates. In spite of this, the reading circle did not survive this first experience. Lucie explained its disappearance because it did not offer students enough opportunities to expand the activity as anticipated. It was also difficult to find reading material at her students' level.

Lucie's involvement in the reading project with a professor from the university contributed to orienting her teaching toward activities offering choices to children. For example, after having listening to a story and read a song on a similar theme, the children had a choice between two open-ended activities. On another occasion, the children divided into small groups were asked to select one poem out of six, and to chose the best means to present it to the class. Lucie had developed a series of activities from the reading of a novel. In each case, the children were given many opportunities to express their feelings and their understanding of it. They could also initiate activities on their own.

Lucie integrated French with other curricular subjects. Religion, health, and science were areas in which the children had opportunities to use the language in meaningful situations. Most of the time, Lucie acted as a resource person in the development of classroom projects. She was the one who set up a framework in which the children could make choices and plan their projects to be presented to the whole class. During these activities Lucie was acting as a coordinator, helping children when they asked for assistance, reassuring a child encounter-

ing difficulties, providing extra information for those who expressed their willingness to expand their work, etc. On these occasions, there were many opportunities for children to use the language in a meaningful way, and to interact with each other in order to grasp a better understanding of what they were working on.

Summary

Jan's change in her personal life and Lucie's soul searching, combined with other external factors led them to move toward a teaching approach centered on the child and on the communicative aspect of the language. Their attentiveness to their students' needs, school boards' expectations, and conversations with colleagues helped them to reflect on their teaching.

1. They moved from teacher-led lessons to open-ended learning activities.
2. They used children's works, and meaningful material rather than instructional material to develop purposeful activities.
3. They individualized their teaching in order to better answer children's needs and interests.

Chapter Summary

The insights generated from the data for the first research question on the nature of teaching French language arts in an immersion situation showed that the two teachers tried to reproduce an environment that fosters the child development and the acquisition of a second language.

1. They provided children with interesting and meaningful activities.

2. They tried to integrate French language arts with other curricular subjects.
3. They proposed activities in which the language skills were interrelated.
4. They tried to organize activities in which children could interact through classroom discussions and small group work.

However,

1. Classroom discussions were restrictive since the message was oriented more to the teacher than to the class.
2. Spelling and grammar skills were not always presented in real context.

The findings from the second research question describe and explain the factors that influenced teachers' choices and planning when teaching French language arts in an immersion setting. The study shows that teachers tried to make their decisions and actions in reference to the situation in which they were placed and to external demands.

The study indicates that the two grade four teachers were influenced by the following various internal and external factors when choosing and planning their activities.

Teachers' Biographies

1. During interviews and informal conversations, the two teachers expressed their feelings about their schooling. Their interpretations of their first experiences at school lead them to design activities in which the language was not seen as a series of rules to be memorized, but as a means of communication, a means for children to get a better understanding of themselves and their

social world.

2. Teachers' positions in regard to spelling seem to have been influenced by their own abilities in this area. The teacher who did not have difficulties in spelling did not plan special activities other than one dictation a week. She did not put emphasis on correct spelling other than for the functional vocabulary. The other teacher having encountered difficulties in this area during her schooling, worked over children's writings until they were error-free.
3. In one case, the teaching material used during previous teaching made the teacher realize how limited her teaching was, and how removed from children's needs and interests it was when compared to the new material. She decided to base the choice and the planning of the activities on the child's interest. In the other case, previous teaching experiences with adults learning a second language had shaped the orientation taken by this teacher for teaching French as a second language in an immersion situation. Her perception of standardized tests led her to modify her teaching, to use workbook activities in order to prepare students to face such testing.

Program of Studies and Prescribed Material

1. In one case, the lack of an adequate program of studies for French immersion students led the teacher to base the teaching of the grammatical aspect of the language on the children's needs. She first used the prescribed material to introduce this knowledge and later she used reading projects and children's works to do so.

2. For the other teacher, the lack of adequate prescribed material led her to base her teaching on the program of studies, and to create activities such as collective writing and dictation in order to develop grammar. The lack of suitable reading texts in her teaching material led her to look for other resources.

Resources Materials

The lack of resource materials led one teacher to abandon one long-term activity on which she had placed great hope.

Parents' Expectations

Parental expectations were mostly expressed in regard to their child's social relationship with their classmates. Teachers based their actions on what they believed was the best for their students. They promoted respect and understanding of others through their activities. They tried to be good role models for them.

School Board's Expectations

1. One teacher seemed reluctant to use standardized tests requested by school boards. She did not believe in the validity of these tests to evaluate the child in an immersion situation since they were originally designed for francophones. According to the teachers, daily work seemed to be a more suitable means to evaluate students.
2. The implementation of new programs seemed to add pressure on teachers. One teacher had difficulties in getting organized to satisfy the demands. She felt as if she had to sacrifice parts of what she was doing to cope with the new situation.
3. One teacher had the impression that she had to use the instruc-

tional material proposed by her school administration. This seemed to limit her choices when planning. She encountered difficulties answering children's needs and interests.

4. One teacher did not question the choice of the instructional material since she trusted the school administration.

Colleagues

1. Teachers benefited from discussions with colleagues when the purpose was to get a better understanding of their teaching, and when they shared thoughts about what they were doing and why.
2. The pressure caused by the teacher's mandate to cover the program of studies might be accentuated by colleagues' comments and beliefs.
3. A colleague's point of view on one aspect of teaching might lead teachers to deviate from their usual line of action despite what they truly believed.

Time

1. Teachers felt time pressures especially when they had to plan activities requested by the implementation of new programs, and when they had to participate in unscheduled school events.
2. The search for resource material seemed to be time consuming.
3. It did not appear that the time factor was taken into account when planning activities. Teachers seemed to follow the children's pace. They allocated time according to what they felt would be best for children.

Noise

Teachers did not consider noise as a factor that might affect the choice and the planning of an activity. It was mostly when the children were engaged in it that it was taken into account. However, it did not restrict them from letting children work in small groups. They believed children needed to talk with each other in order to enhance their languae skills.

The third research question asked about the relationship that exists between these factors and the changes produced in the teaching strategies throughout the school year. It appears that some of these internal and external elements are related to the teachers' change in pedagogical approach.

Internal factors such as a change in personal life and soul searching motives that underlined one's pedagogy prepared techers to pay attention to the external factors. The teachers willingness to answer to children's needs and interests was the most important external factor causing change. In the process of interacting with the children, the teachers tried to adapt their action to the children when choosing and planning activities.

Changes were also a result of an interplay between several factors. Children's needs and school administrators' expectations led teachers to modify their actions in order to attend to new demands. A better understanding of their teaching role and what enhances children's learning, gained through discussions with colleagues, provoked some modifications in the choice and the planning of French language arts activities in an immersion situation.

Teachers came to view the teaching of a second language in a

holistic way. They became more conscious that the French language learning in an immersion situation was considered less as a subject in the curriculum and more as a means with which the children could discover and act upon on the world surrounding them.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was first designed to answer two questions regarding the nature of French language arts activities in two French immersion settings, and the factors that influenced these teachers in the choice and the planning of daily activities in their classes. In the course of the study, the researcher felt the need to add another question in relation to the changes noticed in the pedagogical approach of the two teachers. The third question was: What is the relationship between these factors and the changes produced in the teachers' teaching strategies throughout the school year?

This study rests on the premise that human beings base their actions through the meaning of their social world. This meaning is acquired on a dual process of interpretation and definition of the situation. When interacting in a classroom situation, the two grade four teachers were engaged in an interpretive process in which they analyzed and evaluated the situation, adjusted their intentions, feelings and attitudes in order to cope with the new situation, and then judged the appropriateness of their actions. The meaning gained through this process shaped subsequent interpretations of the situation.

This research method is limited with regard to the number of teachers under study. It is hoped that the findings derived from these two grade four teachers will help the reader to understand teachers involved in classroom situations in a similar context.

In this chapter, the writer reports on conclusions regarding the three leading questions, implications of the findings, and some recommendations for the people involved in second language teaching in an immersion situation.

Conclusions

The data suggest that the two teachers tried to reproduce an environment that fosters child development and the acquisition of a second language. They attempted to develop interesting and meaningful activities in which language skills were interrelated. They encouraged children to interact with each other through classroom discussion and small group work. However, it happened that classroom discussion was restrictive. Spelling and grammar skills were not always presented in context.

When choosing and planning French language arts activities in an immersion situation the teachers seemed to be influenced by an interplay of internal and external factors. It appears that the teachers' commitment toward their students was the primary factor that affected their decisions and actions. Their mandate to foster the acquisition of a second language in an immersion situation was viewed in relation to the development of the child rather than to the language component per se. It did happen occasionally that some activities were aimed solely at developing one aspect of the language, but on most occasions, it was to enhance the oral or written communicative aspect of the language.

The teachers' perceptions of what constituted French language arts

lesson acquired during their schooling provided them with some insights on what constitutes meaningful and purposeful activities for children in language arts.

Parents seeking some help in solving their children's social problems, and the school boards' demands, especially in regard to standardized tests and implementation of new programs, also influenced the teachers in the development of activities in their class.

The characteristics of the instructional material and teachers difficulties in finding suitable resource material led them to revise their position with regard to their teaching strategies. It also appears that immersion teachers are influenced by factors similar to those observed in other teaching situations. However, the prescribed material and the lack of availability of resource material seemed to limit teachers in the selection and the planning of the activities rather than to help them.

The development of a long-term project with a colleague prompted many activities in one class observed. Thoughtful discussions with a former teacher and a student teacher helped the other teacher to clarify certain aspects of her teaching and take them into account in determining subsequent activities.

The third research question dealt with the relationships between the factors that influence teachers in the choice and planning of French language arts activities in an immersion situation and the changes resulting in their pedagogical approach.

It appears that the changes in their pedagogical approach were due to a combination of factors. However, one factor seems to be predominant: the teacher's readiness to change. The problems caused by her

family situation had drained the energy of one teacher. She could not devote as much time to her teaching as she wanted. It was only after Christmas, when the situation improved that she could concentrate on her task. Then she met a colleague from another school district and they planned a project that lasted until the end of the school year. The interest that the children developed toward this project provided her with new insight with regard to teaching.

In the other case, it was her soul searching for motives that led the teacher to change. Her self-questioning combined with child's questioning and a discussion with her student teacher showed her that it was no longer necessary to hide behind the false security of the prescribed material. From that moment, she decided to concentrate her teaching on the children's needs and interests rather than on the material.

During the course of the year, this teacher met a professor from university and through their discussion she became more conscious of what she was doing in class and tried to improve her teaching.

Implications and Recommendations

It is hoped that this study will provide some insights into the area of teaching a second language in an immersion situation.

As described, the child was at the center of the teachers' decisions and actions. These two teachers went back to their own experiences during their schooling to establish the framework needed to make activities interesting in the fostering of second language acquisition. As reported by one teacher, the university teachers

promoted a student-centered approach while they themselves used a teacher-centered approach. Consequently, a teacher training program should stress the importance of the learner. Courses should be planned in such a way that students can discover that their personal development as future teacher is more important than the course content.

The results also show that teachers benefit from being in contact with colleagues. Discussions on a one-to-one basis seems to make teachers more aware of the various aspects of their teaching situation than through in-services or conferences. The teachers' comments on current professional development activities are indicative of their importance. For example, instead of participating in the Teachers' Convention activities, one teacher chose to meet with a colleague to plan a long-term project. During one of my visits, the other teacher mentioned that she had a half-day in-service in the afternoon. However, she had not bothered to find out what was to be discussed. Schoolboard authorities, school administrators and language consultants should seek to develop professional sessions in which teachers receive information on one aspect of their teaching in addition to have the opportunity of discussing it in order to make sense out of it.

The use of standardized tests to evaluate children's progress adds more pressure on teachers' shoulders. Teachers feel they have to adapt their teaching to the test rather than to the child. Government authorities should seek to develop evaluation tools congruent to the pedagogical approach and to the clientele for which the program of studies is designed.

Teachers feel insecure when they have to implement new programs. They see this as an additional burden to their already overloaded

tasks. The school authorities should prepare teachers to face new situations by showing them how to integrate the new program with what is already being done in class.

The characteristics of the instructional material seem to affect the choice and the planning of activities. Teachers feel they have to cover the teaching material in order to cover the program. Materials congruent with the pedagogical approach promoted in the program of study combined with teachers having a better understanding of their role in planning should help them to overcome this problem. In the past, teachers had to follow a specific method step-by-step to teach French. They did not have a choice. Now, school authorities have to prepare them to make choices, and to be responsible in regard to these choices. They also have to help teachers overcome their feelings of insecurity with regard to making choices. I believe that it is through discussions with colleagues and language consultants that teachers will have confidence in their own ability to teach.

School-wide projects such as the one experienced by one teacher seemed to help her adopt new teaching strategies. School administrators and language consultants should encourage teachers to participate in the elaboration and the implementation of these projects in order to improve their teaching strategies.

The lack of availability of resource material seems to limit teachers in the selection and the planning of activities other than those presented in their teaching material. People involved in the French immersion programs should combine their efforts in order to offer better library services. The establishment of a non-profit organization mandated to organize a library network within each of the

six regional offices in Alberta might help to solve the problem.

A better understanding of the process of second language acquisition would help teachers to select and plan activities that foster the acquisition of the target language. Teachers would be less tempted to plan activities oriented toward the development of spelling and grammar skills. They would also be able to see how language can be developed across the curriculum.

Implications of the Research on the Researcher

Scheduled visits in two classrooms over a period of six months, and interviews and informal conversations with the teachers were considered by the writer as being of great value. It was one of the best learning experiences for a former teacher and language consultant. It allowed her to reflect upon her own teaching. The fact that she could concentrate on what was going on in class, as an observer, permitted her to have another perspective on certain teaching practices.

Teaching Strategies

Teachers' control of their students and the content of a lesson have been of special interest to her. She noticed that most of the conversations in these two classes were directed toward the teacher ever if the content was of general interest. Throughout their schooling, children have developed a sense of audience limited to the teacher. What do teachers do to create this restrictive environment? First, when a child addresses the class, he looks forward more to the teacher's approval than to his peers'. The teacher represents

authority and the teacher's comments are of great value for the child. Second, the two teachers' willingness to know as much as possible about each child led them to monopolize the situation. THEY wanted to know... Teachers should seek to develop means that will include the other children in the discussions. For example, small group discussions will allow more interaction among the children. A summary report from each group will provide the other students, as well as the teachers, with necessary information about each other.

The researcher also noticed that teachers should not preplan activities in detail. They should be more confident in their students' abilities to participate in the organization of the classroom activities. Children proved more than once that they could initiate a project and complete it while coping with problems peculiar to the situation. Children could be considered as curriculum maker.

Meeting children's needs and interests is not sufficient to motivate children to participate actively in classroom projects. There must be a purpose that goes beyond each individual's needs and interest, and this purpose must be explicit. It is important to let the children know that they do not solely work to please the teacher. They must realize that what they do must benefit to themselves first and others after.

Teachers must seek to develop open-ended activities, and to offer choices. By doing so, they allow children to work at their own level of abilities and interests, and to learn how to make choices and be responsible for their choices.

Being in contact with texts representative of the French language is not sufficient for children to learn adequate sentence structures.

Immersion teachers should be good models of the target language. Children need to hear good French in order to reproduce it orally and in written form.

To improve their teaching, teachers must also reflect on what they are doing in class, and why. This reflection will help them to be more conscious of their strengths and weaknesses in their teaching practice. This knowledge will facilitate their search for adequate solutions to their problems.

It is hoped that what the researcher gained from this study will help her to improve her own teaching practice.

However, the observational session in these two classes leaves the researcher with more questions on the characteristics of immersion situation.

Time Factor

The time factor came back several times during the research project. Does the time factor play a specific role in an immersion program? The researcher noticed that the two teachers did not base their planning on the amount of time necessary to complete an activity. They preferred to have children immersed in the learning situations.

Does this mean that, in order to learn a second language in an immersion situation, teachers should put the emphasis on the quality of children's participation in the activity instead of on the quantity? (In this context, quality means the degree of children's involvement in the situation. Children should be actively involved in order to benefit from a situation.)

Noise Factor

The researcher associated the immersion classrooms to be a beehive. Most of the time there was a background noise caused by children working in small groups. Does this mean that in an immersion setting children have more opportunities to interact with each others? Is this interaction between learners necessary to learn a second language in an immersion situation? Does this mean that teacher-led lessons observed by researchers (Cummins 1987) tend to yield to situations in which children can participate actively?

Parental Expectations

The review of literature suggested that parents with children in immersion go beyond what is experienced by teachers in the regular program. However, this study revealed that parents did not have much influence on teachers. Thus, could this state of affair be explained that, by the time their children reach grade four, parents found answers to their questions about their child's progress and the choice made? Does this mean that early childhood teachers face more pressure from parents than upper elementary teachers? If so, are there other critical stages in French immersion children's schooling?

Change Process

While studying the change produced in the two teachers' pedagogical approach the researcher wondered if there were particular elements to change. We often hear that in order to change, one should be a risk taker; one should have self-confidence, and, that one should also be conscious of his/her own actions in order to know where he/she stands with regard to a pedagogical approach. Were these two elements part of

Jan's and Lucie's personality?

Jan did not seem to be a risk taker. At the beginning of the school year, she relied on the teaching material to plan activities. She did adjust the activities presented in the teacher's guide. However, she only made minor modifications in order to make the activities more interesting for children. She rarely expanded themes developed in her teaching material.

Through classroom observation, it was possible to see when Jan anticipated problems. When this occurred, Jan usually took a long time to explain the activities. She tended to dominate the classroom interaction by repeating herself many times.

Jan mentioned that she had no tendency to venture in a special project if she was not sure to succeed because she had high self-expectations. Jan tended to rely on others to make decisions. At the beginning of the school year, a colleague told her that it was necessary to develop all themes in her teaching material in order to cover the grade four program of studies. Jan took it for granted and based her long-term planning on this premise. Jan's decision to edit children's written works thoroughly came from her reactions to colleagues' comments. She could have analyzed the situation and then, decide what was the best for her students.

Jan's willingness to expand the letter exchange project to most other classroom activities might be associated to the children's reactions to the project rather than to her own convictions with regard to learning. In fact, her comments were mostly oriented toward the children's level of participation in the activities; rarely on the effect of open-ended activities on their learning process.

In Lucie's case, even if she felt insecure on some occasions, we could say that she was a risk taker. She was willing to overcome her insecurity by facing the situation. She knew that since she put the prescribed material aside she would have to rely on her own strength and judgement to plan activities that would cover the grade four program of studies. For example, she did not fear involving her students in theatrical activities even if she did not have the basic knowledge. She said that it was by doing and by analyzing a situation that one would learn.

Lucie was often questioning her actions in class. She wanted to know if the activities planned were congruent with her pedagogical approach. For example, at the beginning of the school year, her first move was to analyze the teaching material in order to know if it could meet the children's needs. She also took all opportunities to discuss her teaching strategies with her colleagues. She even invited them to her class in order to initiate thoughtful discussions on their pedagogical approach.

From the above observations, we could say that Jan's personality did not match with the elements previously identified as particular to change. Nevertheless, change occurred in her class. Are there other elements that could explain change? The answer might be in the permanency of the change produced. The researcher wondered if the changes observed were permanent in both cases. Caley and Sawada (1984) offer an explanation of change based on the state of equilibrium between an individual and his/her environment. They identified three states of equilibrium:

1. An equilibrium with the environment: changes are so limited that

there is little transformation. "Everything is ordered, in balance, in the proper place, in the proper form at scheduled time in accordance with the rules" (p. 10).

2. Near-equilibrium with the environment: The dynamics of change is similar to a pendulum swinging. "The forces of stability are much too powerful for innovative systems near-equilibrium to overcome, and their initial momentum causes a return to the initial state" (p. 13).
3. Far-from-equilibrium with the environment: The individuals are in continual state of BECOMING, in perpetual self-actualization. Because they are sensitive to external influences, they seek to self-reorganize their actions. The transformation is usually irreversible. (p. 5)

At what state of equilibrium are these two teachers? Did the change observed follow a cyclic pattern? Do teachers tend: (1) to rely more on their teaching material at the beginning of the school year than toward the end?, (2) to develop child-centered activities once they know their students better?, (3) to control classroom interactions at the beginning of the school year in order to let children know who they are and what they expect from them, and once their status is well-established they gradually change the pattern? Is their reaction to the environment an attempt to reorganize their "selves?"

These unanswered questions indicate that there is a need for further study to shed light: (1) on what constitutes the best environment for the acquisition of a second language, and (2) on what is the dynamics of change in an immersion situation.

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